A CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF

SRI VEDANTA DESIKA

VIS-A-VIS

THE SRI VAISHNAVITE WORLD.

By

Sri. S. SATYAMURTHI IYENGAR, B. A.,

GWALIOR.

Adapted from the various Tamil works of

SRI JAGADACHARYA P. B. ANNANGARACHARYA SWAMI.

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PREFACE.

Sometime ago, I had attempted a brief life sketch, in English, of Sri Manavala Mahamunigal, the scintillating rearguard of the great galaxy of 'Poorvacharyas' and it was indeed an exhilarating experience. It is now my humble privilege to attempt the present treatise, highlighting the important and interesting facts about Sri Vedanta Desikar, the 'Kavitharkika Simha' — a lion among poets and philosophers—the poets' poet, who adorned the great hierarchy and shone in the Vaishnavite firmament with great splendour and rare brilliance, about six hundred years ago. In undertaking this work, I have been prompted by a deep inner urge to focus the attention of the disinterested and dispassionate readers (including the vast body of educated Vaishnavites, who are obviously getting increasingly tired of the longdrawn, fruitless war of polemics between the two sects, in the perilous context of fast-crumbling mores and traditions freely playing upon non-astika sentiments and seriously endangering the solidarity of Vaishnavism), on the various points dealt with by Jagadacharya Simhasanadhipathi Ubhaya Vedanta Mahavidvan P. B. Annangaracharya Swami of Sri Kanchi, in his numerous works on Sri Desika. The sincere and dispassionate scholars, who have had the good fortune to go through the Swami's glossary on the Sthothras composed by Sri Desika, 'Desika hirdayam' and other allied works, can hardly fail to notice his characteristic thoroughness and deep penetration, bringing to the fore, his missionary zeal in putting things in their proper perspective. Apart from his traditional devotion to Sri Vedanta Desikar, as an illustrious scion of the great Prativadi Bhayankaram family, his deep erudition and vast learning and, above all, his intense study of Sri Desika's works, with rare zeal and remarkable application, do compel the attention of one and all. The gems of unique beauty and rare excellence, purveyed by such a stalwart, would, but for his special efforts, remain completely submerged and unknown to the literary world, in general, and the Vaishnavite world, in particular. Even so, it would be most unfortunate if these went unnoticed or unheeded, due to sectarian rancour and prejudices, which again are due, in no small measure, to the misguided fanaticism of later day interpreters and glossators, who have manouvred to create a tense atmosphere of hostility and animosity. With a correct and dispassionate approach and a true appreciation of the relationship that subsisted between Sri Desika and the contemporary Sri Vaishnavas and the lustre shed by him on the later Acharyas across the centuries, there is no reason why the present area of the so-called divergence between the two sections of Vaishnavites (Thenkalais and Vadakalais) should not dwindle down to negligible proportions even if it is not eliminated altogether. It is earnestly hoped that this humble effort of the undersigned, in presenting the picture, as gathered from the works of that great doyen of Ubhaya Vedantas (Sri P. B. A. Swami) who is admitted, on all hands, as a marvel of learning in modern times, will serve to make a beginning in the right direction and that a new era of blissful rapprochement of ideas and harmonious blending of mental attitudes will dawn on the Vaishnavite world at large, at no distant date.

Gwalior,
20-9-'67.

S. SATYAMURTHI.

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(Section I)

THE PARAMOUNT NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY.

Sri Vedanta Desika, a veritable lion among poets and philosophers, lived in this world for a full hundred years (1268-1368 A. D.) and it is indeed a matter for great jubilation that his six-centenary will be celebrated next year, with all the gusto it richly deserves. He was a beacon light radiating knowledge all round—the pride of his age. He acquired a wonderful mastery over the Ubhaya Vedantas—the Samskrit and Dramidic lore, including the esoteric religious teachings in both the languages and illuminated this abode of ours, through precept and practice—dissemination of learning, far and wide, and leading an exemplary life of selfless renunciation and vow of poverty. The ease and thoroughness with which he could vanquish his religious opponents and his extra-ordinary poetic skill made his contemporaries wonder, as Sri Desika has himself put it in his Sanskrit drama "Sankalpa-Suryodaya", whether he was, as it were, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu's holy bell. "*Utprekshyate* budhajanair upapathi-bhoomna ...." (உத்ப்ரேக்ஷ்யதே புதஜனை: உபபத்திபூம்னா)

He lived in perfect harmony and amity with the contemporaneous Acharyas, imbibed a great deal from the eminent works of the illustrious "Poorva Acharyas" (the great Vaishnavite teachers of the past) and wrote appreciative treatises on those works. The reader is invited to go through "Sri Ramanujan-217" in order to have an idea of the impact of Periavachan Pillai and Nampillai on Vedanta Desika. Likewise, the contemporary Thennacharya Sampradayis as well as those who flourished after Desika's period and the later exponents of the said Sampradaya including that great Savant, Sri Manavala Mamunigal, the last of the great galaxy of 'Poorvacharyas' drew upon the scintillating works of Vedanta Desika, Engalazhvan, Nadathoorammal and Sruthaprakasika Bhattar, in the same way as they made use of the works of Koorathazhvan, Parasara Bhattar, Nanjeeyar etc. Mamunigal has reinforced his writings with quotations from Desika's 'Rahasyatraya-saram' 'Tatwamukta-Kalaapa', 'Nyasa-Vimsati' etc. Vadikesari Alagiya Manavala Jeeyar, who survived Vedanta Desika by a

bare sixteen years, has, in his woks such as 'Tatvadeepa' etc., quoted from Vedanta Desika's works. Two hundred years later a remote successor of this Jeeyar paid homage to Azhvan, Bhattar, Nanjeeyar, Nampillai, Manavala Mamunigal, Srutaprakasika Bhattar, Vedanta Desika and Doddayacharya, in the invocation Slokas of his work entitled 'Vedanta-Sastra-Dravida-agamadya-dasaka-dvandwaika-kanthyam'. Sri Doddayacharya of Cholasimha puram, a Tenkalai Acharya who preceded this Jeeyar, wrote out a commentary on Vedanta Desika's 'Satadooshani', entitled 'Chandamarutam' and this was printed by his Thenkalai disciple. Doddayacharya's disciple, Narasimharajacharya Swami has written commentaries on Vedanta Desika's works such as 'Nyaya parisuddhi' etc. That great Thenkalai celebrity, Mysore (Mandayam) Anantazhvan, who flourished in the early part of the nineteenth century, has also made frequent references to Sri Desika's works in his own writings. Again, the Kunrapakkam Swami, another Thenkalai Scholar of great repute, who adorned Kanchi in the latter half of the 19th century, has extolled, in his work entitled 'Tatwa-Ratnavali', Sri Vedanta Desika in such terms as "Jayati Bhagavan Vedantaryas sa tharkika-kesari". All these would undoubtedly establish that perfect harmony, concord and mutual adoration subsisted between Sri Vedanta Desika and the contemporaneous Acharyas in Srirangam and elsewhere, as well as the Acharyas belonging to the later periods.

There is nothing on record to show or indicate that Sri Vedanta Desika broke off from the rest of the Vaishnavite fold at any time or exhibited fissiparous tendencies by way of changing the caste-mark or founding a new school of philosophy, which could be styled as 'Desika-Darsanam', as is sought to be made out in certain quarters. In fact, such a trend of thought gained currency only during the last 150 or 200 years. Neither during Sri Desikar's life-time nor till about four hundred years afterwards were to be found such over-zealous votaries smacking of groupism, whose beginnings (i.e.) contact with and adoration of Desikar could be traced to a comparatively recent period, namely, the beginning of the 19th century, round about the time one Thirukkudandai Gopala Desikacharya interested himself in writing commentaries on Sri Desika's 'Rahasyatraya-saram', 'Stotras' etc. Unlike the Thennacharyas who lived on intimate terms with Sri Desika during his life-time and who draw inspiration from him down the years, in an unbroken succession, as brought out in the preceding paragraph, these new votaries of Sri Desika, who came on the scene, more than four hundred years after he had left this abode of ours, could have obviously had no real roots in that great luminary by reason of this enormous gap that separated them. On the other

hand, the devotion of Prativadi Bhayankaram Anna and his clan as well as Cholasimhapuram Doddayacharya and his disciples and descendants for Desikar is too-well-known. They worshipped in their respective households the idol of Vedanta Desika and their progenies have proudly borne the name of Vedantacharya, down to this day. Actually, the descendants of Prativadi Bhayankaram Anna residing in Thiruvindalur and other southern centres even bear the name of Vedanta Desika's son, Nayinaracharya, not confining their devotion to Vedanta Desika alone, but extending it down to his son. Likewise, worship of Sri Desika's image was not confined to the households only, but extended to the temples, almost all of which were administered by the Thenkalais till a few of them changed hands and passed on to the Vadakalais, in recent years. The Thenkalais persevere with the ritualistic worship of Vedanta Desika and the conduct of festivals in his honour down to this day, undeterred by all manner of vilification, grotesque misrepresentations etc., unabashedly indulged in, all the year round, by a violent section of the 'Vadakalais'. Of course, it goes without saying that the idols of Vedanta Desika bear the pristine Thenkalai caste-mark. Certainly, this is in strange contrast with the treatment understood to have been meted out by this antagonistic section to the idols of Manavala Mamunigal in the temples, which came to be administered by them after conversion from the Thenkalai mode of worship. These idols were altogether expelled in some temples of this category, while in the others they were palmed off as those of Alavandar (Saint Yamunacharya) with the original caste-mark chiselled out and substituted by the Vadakalai mark. When this tendency of theirs overflowed its continent and stole into the temples conforming to Thenkalai mode of worship, it naturally met with a stern rebuff at the unrelenting hands of law. Surreptitious meddling with the Thenkalai caste-mark on the forehead of the image of Vedanta Desika in the hallowed temple at Srirangam and other places resulted in the conviction of the miscreants by law courts. In no less than the temple of Deepaprakasa (at Kanchi) at the birth place of Vedanta Desika, the idol of Desika bore only the Thenkalai caste-mark, till a few years ago, when it was got changed through official favours and special dispensations, in precisely the same way as a few other temples were weaned away. The reader will find Annexure A both interesting and revealing in this context.

A deep and dispassionate study of the vast array of Vedanta Desika's works will unmistakably prove his love and regard for the contemporary Sri Vaishnava Acharyas and unstinted devotion for the great Luminaries, who had preceded him—Sri Ramanuja, Alavandar etc. It was his abiding love and regard for the contemporary Acharyas that made Vedanta Desika deeply yearn

for his return to Srirangam in their beloved midst, when he was forced to live in distant Satyakalam during the troublesome days of what was known as the 'Sack of Srirangam' by the Muhammadans. In a hymn sung by him for expelling danger (Abhithistava) he gave expression to this intense longing, as follows: "Kvachana Rangamukhye Vibho! *paraspara-hitaishinam, paricareshu mam vartaya*" க்வசந ரங்கமுக்யே விபோ பரஸ்பரஹிதைஷிணாம் பரிசரேஷு மாம் வர்த்தய. Oh Lord! *let me reside in Srirangam at the feet of the great ones who are mutual well-wishers.* Again, in the last verse of 'Bhagavad-dhyana Sopanam', Sri Desika pays a glowing tribute to the erudite scholars and art-lovers of Srirangam, who imparted clarity to his thoughts and enabled him to develop a facile and pleasing style. At this stage, it is necessary to bring into sharp focus the fact that during those days there was no cleavage among the Sri Vaishnavites, such as is being witnessed now—two different Sampradayas, two different teams, two different caste-marks and so on. It was one solid, homogeneous block, in which all the Sri Vaishnavites moved and mingled freely, partaking of the religious life inherited through the illustrious lineage descending from Emberumanar (Sri Ramanuja). Even assuming, for a moment, that Sri Vedanta Desika did secede or felt like seceding, there was no other group he could join and it would have meant his chalking out a lone path, which he never did and, in fact, there was absolutely no question of his wanting to do so, as could be gathered from Desika's own utterances, as above.

In the vast array of the 'Poorvacharyas' beginning with Sriman Nathamuni and ending with Sri Manavala Mamuni, Sri Ramanuja has, indubitably and indisputably, the pride of place. Our system of philosophy has been named as "Emberumanar (Ramanuja) Darsanam" by Lord Ranganatha (enshrined in Srirangam) Himself—not as Nathamuni Darsana, Alavandar Darsana, Bhattar Darsana or Nadathoor Ammal Darsana. Vedanta Desika's adoration of Sri Ramanuja (Yatiraja-the king of ascetics) knew no bounds, as revealed by his 'Yatiraja-Saptati'. In his 'Rahasyatraya-sara' he says: "Embar has said that even as insects sticking to the body of a lion leap from one peak to another along with the lion, we ascend the high Heavens without the slightest effort, merely by virtue of our connection with Sri Ramanuja". Embar, a direct disciple of Sri Ramanuja, obviously made this statement from a first-hand knowledge of the boon graciously granted to Sri Ramanuja by Lord Ranganatha. Vedanta Desika, who came nearly 150 years after Ramanuja, has brought out clearly in a Sloka of his 'Nyasa-Tilaka' how even remote connection with Sri Ramanuja (as distinguished from direct connection like Embar's) fills our bill all right. The Sloka in question reads as:

Ukthya Dhananjaya-Vibhishana-lakshyaya the
Prathyayya Lakshmana-munerbhavatha vithirnam;
Sruthwa varam tadanubandha-madavaliptho
Nithyam prasida Bhagavan mayi Ranganatha.

உக்த்யா தநஞ்ஜய-விபீஷண-லக்ஷ்யயா தே
ப்ரத்யாய்ய லக்ஷ்மணமுநேர் பவதா விதீர்ணம்,
ச்ருத்வா வரம் ததநுபந்த மதாவலிப்தே
நித்யம் ப்ரஸீத பகவன் மயி ரங்கநாத.

"Oh Lord Ranganatha! I have heard of the boon you conferred upon Sri Ramanuja, assuring him of its certain fulfilment by you, quoting reference to the Charama Slokas delivered earlier by you to Vibhishana and Arjuna during Your Avatars as Rama and Krishna. Verily, I am proud of my connection with Sri Ramanuja and I beseech You to be always merciful to me". The mercy invoked here by Vedanta Desika is by way of pacifying the Lord for having indirectly told Him that salvation need not be granted by Him, as it had already been guaranteed to him by his connection with Sri Ramanuja. Such being the depth of Desika's devotion to Sri Ramanuja, it would be hardly appropriate to think in terms of a separate 'Desika Darsana', an expression quite often on the lips of the so-called Desika Bhaktas and the tip of their pens too. It would *prima facie* be an affront to Sri Desika himself. This new group of persons had no connection with Sri Desika till the beginning of the last century and were not even acquainted with his name for centuries. With their new-found loyalty for Vedanta Desika, they tried to make inroads into the temples, all of which were owned and managed by Tenkalai Sri Vaishnavites and employed all sorts of means and methods to secure their objectives. Unable to make much head-way in the face of a stern and deterrent legal machinery they had to run on parallel lines, with separate temples for Desika outside the temple precincts, except in the few centres where the temples themselves had passed on to them, parallel 'thanians', parallel 'Patram', parallel 'Vazhi Thirunamam' etc. The life history of Vedanta Desika has been written by some of them, containing mutually discrepant statements of apocryphal origin, with all the inherent limitations of a life-sketch attempted four hundred years later, and mainly directed towards the denigration of all the previous Vaishnava Acharyas, who were held in great esteem by Tenkalai Sri Vaishnavas and by Sri Desika himself, as brought out in the foregoing paragraphs. Fanaticism and factionalism naturally make their victims purblind and, by and large, they do not hesitate to compromise truth. Indeed, fanaticism consists in redoubling one's efforts when the aim is forgotten. The hymn of hatred and the malicious propaganda carried on by

this section to grotesque lengths, of late, as shown in the succeeding paragraphs, have reached the limits of acerbity. It is only when some one pierces the curtain of rancour and prejudice, sifts the naked truth and sorts out the facts, it would be possible to fix Sri Vedanta Desika's place in the Vaishnavite world, well and truly.

(Section II)

LIFE-HISTORY OF THE GREAT TEACHER

The earliest and perhaps the most authentic work on the subject is the 'Acharya-champu', otherwise known as 'Vedantacharya Vijaya', written by one Kousika Kavitarkikasimha Vedantachariar, a great Sanskrit scholar and a gifted poet, who flourished about 250 years ago. This Sanskrit champu, a combination of prose and verse, written in beautiful syle, portrays faithfully the life of Sri Vedanta Desika, true to the knowledge handed down to the author by tradition.

The first Stabaka begins with a lengthy benediction and proceeds to describe the poet's own family, the city of Kancheepuram and Sri Pundarika Yajwa, grandfather of Desika.

The second Stabaka deals with the birth and marriage of Ananta-Suri (Sri Desika's father) and the entry of the divine Bell into his wife's womb, preparatory to Sri Desika's descent into this world.

The third Stabaka describes the birth of Sri Desika, his childhood, his accompanying his maternal uncle to Sri Vatsya Varadacharya's school and securing the latter's blessings, investiture of the sacred thread, initiation to the study of Vedas, literature, grammar and other sastras, marriage, winning the grace of Lord Hayagriva, composition of various works such as 'Nyaya Siddhanjana' and gaining the title of Kavitarkikasimha.

The fourth Stabaka describes the famous Vaisakha Utsavam of Kanchi, the composition of 'Varadaraja Panchasat', by Sri Desika, his encounter with and vanquishing the famous Adwaita scholar, Vidyaranya and pilgrimage to Venkatadri.

The fifth Stabaka mentions, at length, Sri Desika's pilgrimage to Sri Venkatadri, his composing 'Dayaasataka', receipt of an invitation from Vidyaranya to attend the royal court at Vijayanagar, Desika's reply in the form of 'Vairagya-Panchaka', scorning riches and royal patronage, pilgrimage to North Indian Kshetras and return to Kanchee, delivering judgment in the

debate between Vidyaranya and Akshobhya muni (a Dwaita scholar) pilgrimage to South Indian shrines, his temporary residence at Ahindrapuram, his bringing out several works, his visit to Srimushna Kshetram and getting an invitation from Srirangam to visit that hallowed centre.

The sixth and the concluding Stabaka describes Sri Desika's journey to Srirangam, his having darsan of Lord Sri Ranganatha, composing 'Bhagavad-dhyana-sopana' etc., vanquishing an Advaitin named Krishnamisra, after a frightfully long wordy duel running into as many as eighteen days, gaining the title of Vedantacharya, Sarvatantra-Swatantra etc., writing 'Satadushani', 'Adhikaranasaravali' and many other works, composing 'Padukasahasram' when challenged by a vain poet, the sack of Srirangam by Muslims, Desika's stay in the western part of the country, composing 'Abhitistava', his visits to Kurukapuri, Yadavadri etc., composing 'Garudadandaka' to meet the challenge of a snake-charmer, birth of a son to Sri Desika and composing 'Rahasyatrayasara'.

Although this book commanded wide popularity and was eagerly studied by Sanskrit scholars of yore, it came to be relegated to the back-ground at the turn of the present century, as no attempt was made till very recently to bring out a reprint of the book, which was in Telugu script, thus yielding place to a few other works of questionable veracity, replete with mutually discrepant statements. Anecdotes not included in the 'Acharya Champu' have turned out to be pure and simple fabrications, engineered in later years, by certain interested groups, who, in trying to vilify the contemporary Thenkalai Acharyas of Srirangam and enhance the greatness of Vedanta Desika, have actually held him up to ridicule, as shown below. Two Sanskrit books ascribed to Sri Prathivadi-Bhayankaram Annan Swami and Sri Doddayacharya Swami contain several grammatical and other mistakes unbecoming of their pen and any sane person will straightway declare that they were compiled by inferior pandits. Querried regarding the source from which the Vadakalai exponents have been propagating the life history of Sri Vedanta Desika in recent years, such eminent Vadakalai Vidwans as Thirupputkuzhi Appa Swami of Kanchi and Thiruvaheendrapuram Chetlur Narasimhachariar Swami are reported to have declared vexingly that the 'Guruparampara-prabhavams' compiled in the good olden days had been lost altogether and dubbed as spurious those published in later years (in the year 1857 and 1913, to be precise), in view of the numerous additions and alterations found therein. While the journals incorporating the former's observations are not extant these days, those of Sri Cheltur Swami are indeed available for verification. It is patent from this that there was no historic record other than 'Acharya Champu'

and that distortions crept in later on, when a life history was attempted in 1857 and these were either reinforced or distorted further by subsequent writers. And yet they would want us to believe and accept as authentic the 'Guruparampara Prabhavam of three thousand Granthas (மூவாயிரப்படி) compiled by Triteeya Brahmatantra Swami and published, years ago, by the Parakala Mutt of Mysore, in Telugu script. This compilation brought out with the sole object of having an exclusive 'Guruparampara' for the Vadakalai Sampradayam was got reprinted by the said Mutt as recently as forty years ago while it did not suit these Desika Bhaktas to give a similar treatment to the 'Acharya Champu', referred to at the outset, despite its outstanding brilliance.

BIRTH PLACE OF DESIKAR:

It is claimed by the later writers and the present day Vadakalai Sampradayis, as a whole, that Desikar was corn in an agraharam (residential quarters of Brahmins) known as Thooppul, although such a locality did not even exist during Desikar's days. Visveswara Dikshitar, a descendant of Appayya Dikshitar has written in the biography of the latter that he came and settled down in a place which was newly sanctified as "Thumbai-vanam" and came to be known later in the corrupt form of Thuppal, Thooppal, Thooppil etc. It has to be noted that Appayya Dikshitar belonged to a period much later than Desika's. Even more significant is the undisputed location of the house in which Desikar was born. This stands in front of the temple of 'Deepa Prakasar' (விளக்கொளி எம்பெருமான்) referred to by the Azhvars, in their songs, as "Thiruthanka". This Tamil name of the said locality has been translated by Sri Desika as 'Himopavana' and 'Sisiravana' in his Sanskrit laudatory hymns known as "Deepa Prakasa Stotra". The word 'Thooppul' is not found in any of the ancient works compiled more than 300 or 400 years back and if it had come into being already, surely Desikar would have mentioned the Sanskrit equivalent of it in his works, in the same way as he has referred to 'Thiruthanka'. And yet Desikar is being referred to as "Thooppul Pillai" (apparently in step with Periavachan Pillai, Vadakku Thiruveedhi Pillai and Thiruvoimozhi Pillai) instead of as "Thiruthanka Pillai." No doubt, this distortion affects the starting point itself and yet it pales into insignificance beside the several monstrous ones mentioned hereafter.

An Acharya Purusha is being taken out in a procession round the streets of Srirangam, seated in a palanquin. The procession passes right in front of Desika's house, but Desika is imparting lessons in Sri Bhashya to the disciples assembled in the pial and does not come out into the street to do obeisance to the Acharya Purusha, whereupon the camp-followers of the

Acharya Purusha get enraged, pounce upon Desika, drag him forcibly by the legs into the street and bathe him in mud. It is all incoherent monsense—in the first place, the discourses on Sri Bhashyam are usually held only in the interior of the house and Swami Desika could not have, therefore, noticed the procession moving along the street; if, however, he happened to be right on the pial of the house, it was not in his grain to stay back disrespectfully, whosoever might have paraded along, in the manner reported. Humility is the hallmark of excellence and Sri Desika had both in super-abundance. Whereas it is highly incredible that Sri Desika, who was held in great reverence, as brought out in Section I ante, could have been meted out such a dastardly treatment, it is crystal-clear that this is the farthest limit of vilification of the Thenkalai Acharyas and their disciples, placing them on a par with Ravana and Sisupala, if not worse, a miserable concoction and a grotesque exaggeration, which is its very negation. And what next?

The Sri Vaishnava residents of Srirangam are alleged to have challenged Sri Desikar for a debate and when the latter, in all humility, declined to enter the arena, this good gesture was misconstrued by the challengers as Sri Desika's defeat, which was vociferously proclaimed from the house-tops; not only that, they hung a festoon of worn cut chappals at the entrance so as to hit the Swami on his head when he came out of his house. Far from getting furious or perturbed over it, the Swami is said to have reverentially placed them on his head, saying that he looked upon the foot wear of Sri Vaishnavas as his saviour and so on—"Vayam tu Haridasanam padarakshavalambakah". (வயம் து ஹரிதாஸாநாம் பாதரக்ஷாவலம்பகா). A white lie, most repulsive and revolting—it was sinful to have spun a yarn like this and doubly so, even to restate this gruesome stuff. And then what is the fun of saying in one breath that there were eminent scholars among the Sri Vaishnavas of Srirangam who could challenge Sri Desika for a debate and saying, in another, that they were all men of meagre learning with just a smattering of Tamil and absolutely ignorant of the Sanskrit Sastras and the Vedic lore? Sri Desika could have, no doubt, expressed his adoration of the Sri Vaishnavas in such terms as 'Vayam tu Haridasanam padarakshavalambakah.' But then, does it need a preamble of this sort? Was it at all necessary to support it by an anecdote of this kind? Would not similar anecdotes be necessary to support similar sentiments expressed by Sri Desika, here and there? c.f. "Vande Hastigireesasya veedhee-sodhana-kinkaran" (வந்தே ஹஸ்திகிரீசஸ்ய வீதீசோதந கிங்கராந்) a Sloka found at the beginning of Sri Desika's 'Rahasyatraya sara' indicating his respect even for the scavengers who cleaned the streets of Sri Kanchi, the holy citadel of Lord Varadaraja. "Yatoeswara-sarasvateesurabhitasayanam satham vahami charanambujam pranatisalina moulina"

(யதீச்வரஸரஸ்வதீ-ஸுரபிதாசயாநாம் ஸதாம் வஹாமி சரணாம்புஜம் ப்ரணதிசாலிநா மௌளிநா) is another Sloka rendered by Sri Desika in adoration of the Sri Vaishnavas of Sriperumbudur. It would be hardly necessary to illustrate these sentiments by conjuring up all sorts of unseemly visions and palming them off as true stories just to fan the flame of sectarian hatred and intensify the malicious propaganda against the Thenkalai Sri Vaishnavas.

The machinations and sinister designs of the evil-minded Sri Vaishnavas of Srirangam are stated to have gone to the length of dissuading the three Brahmins, fixed up earlier by Sri Desika to occupy the places of Pitru, Visvedeva and Vishnu at his father's annual ceremony, to absent themselves at the nick of time, with a view to spoiling the Sraddha. Sri Desika, who was in an unenviable predicament, prayed to Sri Hayagriva, Who presented Himself in the form of three Brahmins and enabled Sri Desika to put through the Sraddha all right. A similar happening is traceable in the life-history of Appayya Dikshitar, already referred to. It looks as if the episode has been transplanted in Sri Desika's life-history just to multiply the instances of alleged harassment of Sri Desika by the contemporary Sri Vaishnavas of Srirangam. How else can any sensible person swallow this, unless it be put down that Sri Desika was so callous and irresponsible as to fix up, for such an important religious function, strangers of dubious character, instead of persons near and dear to him, of proven loyalty and devotion? This is another thoughtless invention recoiling badly on the hero—nth of the series. How silly and short-sighted! It is indeed most regrettable that the very Acharyas whom Sri Desika adored and adopted, have been maligned badly and it has been made to appear that Sri Desika was their avowed enemy, ever bent upon belittling them and condemning their works. A plethora of stories fabricated to provide coverage to this grand theme go under the name and style of "Desika Vaibhavam", "Desika prabhavam", "Desika divya-charitram" and so on. Little wonder that the 'Acharya Champu', which stands on a pedestal of its own, shorn of all such fangled nonsense, has been discredited by these people and relegated to the background. Alas! the ingenious authors of these cock and bull stories offending against all sense of decency and decorum have been miserably myopic and failed to see that these hardly redound to the credit of the great hero. Wouldn't it have been far more appropriate to gladden their own hearts as much as the readers' by expatiating on the vast learning, deep erudition, exemplary conduct and the special halo of Sri Vedanta Desika's divine personality and the solid truth that, during his life time, he radiated knowledge and joy all round? Compare Ramarajya, where all lips sang nothing but the praise of the countless good qualities of Rama — 'Ramo Ramo Rama ithi prajanam abhavan kathah.' (ராமோ ராமோ ராம இதி ப்ரஜாநா மபவன் கதா:)

TITLES.

Several titles were conferred on Swami Desika such as Vedantacharya', 'Kavitharkika-Kesari (Lion among poets and philosophers), 'Sarvathanthra-Swathanthra' and 'Samasya Sahasree', in recognition of his amazing talents of wondrous dimensions. Among these, the title 'Vedantacharya' was given by Lord Ranganatha Himself, as described by Sri Desika in the opening verses of 'Sankalpa Suryodaya'. The word 'Deyo' used at the end of 'Daya Sathakam' and of 'Hari' at the end of 'Sthothra Bhashyam' significantly refer to Lord Ranganatha alone. The other titles like 'Sarvathanthra-Swathanthra' (master of all arts and crafts) were conferred upon Sri Desika by the good and learned men, as stated by Sri Desika himself in 'Sankalpa-Suryodaya' and 'Sthothra-Bhashyam". Some say the title of 'Sarvathanthra-Swathanthra' was given to him by Lord Ranganatha's Divine Consort, Sriranganachiyar. It is understood that in the learned assemblies of eminent men, Sri Desika was acclaimed as 'Samasya-Sahasree'. 'Samasya' means the portion of a verse left incomplete and 'Samasya poorana' is the feat of completing there and then, in the congregation of poets, a verse of which only the first, middle or the last line is mentioned. This great feat of poetic skill was performed by Sri Desika with unrivalled ease and excellence, which secured him the distinction of 'Samasya-Sahasree'. Sri Desika himself has made mention of this in the concluding verse of his 'Stotra Bhashya' as "Aganhi sadasi sadbhih yassamasya-sahasree kavikathaka-mrigendras sarvathanthra-swathanthrah", (அகணி ஸதஸி ஸத்பி: யஸ்ஸமஸ்யாஸஹஸ்ரீ கவிகதகம்ருகேந்த்ர: ஸர்வதந்த்ரஸ்வதந்த்ர:) enumerating some of the titles bestowed on him and 'Samasya Sahasree' is one of them. And yet, in one of the books written by no less a person than Panditabhushanam Chetlur Narasimhachariar Swami, it has been stated that Sri Desika had written a precious book called 'Samasya Sahasree', eightieth in the order of the works composed by him! It is indeed difficult to comprehend how a scholar of his eminence could mistake Sri Desika's title for a book written by him. Unfortunately, we have no direct evidence in the form of the verses which were completed by Sri Desika and which got him this title. This is not, however, so bad if we look into the numerous anecdotes spun around Sri Desika's title of 'Sarvathanthra-Swathanthra', all aimed at showing that Sri Desika was not merely harassed by the Thenkalai Sri Vaishnavas, who were his sworn enemies, but also by all sections of the public, high and low, mason, gold-smith, shoe-maker, snake-charmer and so on, each one challenging the Swami's right to the title of 'Sarvathanthra-Swathanthra'. Isn't it preposterous to imagine, for a moment, that the meanest artisans in the country could have had access to one of Desika's eminence and stature, day in and day out, and drawn him out for a challenge, as if the title in question

conferred by good men of learning was meant to include mastery over every known art like shoe-making, masonry, snake-charming and what not? And on Desika's own part, was it necessary for him to secure earthly fame and approbation by taking up the challenge every time and proving his all-worthiness? An emphatic 'No' is the reply and, in fact, Sri Desika, who shunned all worldly things including name, fame and wealth (Easbanatrayamuktha) would have been in no mood to take the gauntlet from all and sundries and establish his mastery over them all. Sri Desika could have composed 'Garuda-Panchasat' like many other Stotras in the ordinary course of events. The interpolation of the episode of the snake-charmer is just a piece of a dramatisation of the event, harmless though, playing on the credulity of the public to whom miracles have a special appeal, inspiring them with awe and reverence. This incident finds mention in the 'Acharya Champu' also and if only the erudite and enlightened author of the Champu had been aware of the other anecdotes, he would have certainly mentioned them with all the poetic embellishment he was capable of. Surely, he would not have been aware of the umpteen anecdotes, not related to the actual life of Sri Vedanta Desika, but constituting the figments of imagination of the writers of the later days. Even so, it may be noted that while the Champu and other 'Vaibhava-Granthas' of the later writers, have described the venue of the snake-charmer's episode as 'Kanchi', the Pandita-Bhushanam has stated that 'Garuda-dandaka and Garuda-panchasat' were composed at Ahindrapuram. A particular well is even now pointed out in Ahindrapuram as having been built by Sri Desika, all by himself, accepting the challenge thrown by a mason—lending an air of authenticity to the episode. We may leave it as it is, as such stories bear no malice to anybody; but there is no gainsaying that it detracts from Desika's greatness as visualised a little higher up.

Among the numerous works of Sri Desika, 'Paduka-Sahasram', describing the beauteous and beatific foot-wear of Lord Ranganatha, in a thousand mellifluous devotional hymns, has the pride of place. The special circumstances in which those hymns were composed have been described in the last chapter of 'Acharya Champu'. It is said that this was done in order to quell the pride of *some vain poet,* who had boasted of his capacity to produce verses *impromptu.* Those who attempted the life-history of Sri Desika, in later years, have, however, tried to make out that the rival poet was a Thenkalai Acharya, but they are not certain as to who he actually was. Some say that it was Vadikesari, a brother of Sri Pillailokacharya. But then Pillai-Lokacharya had only one brother, named Alagiyamanavala Perumal Nayanar, a naishthika Brahmachari, while Vadikesari was a Sanyasin and neither of them

aspired for any such distiaction and much less went about parading his poetic skill, if any. Whereas truth can be expressed effortlessly, it requires consummate skill to present falsehoods consistently. Well, it is common knowledge that lies cannot always be uttered consistently, without giving themselves away. In this treatise, which has to cover a lot more ground, it does not seem necessary to dilate on this any further.

AUTHORSHIP OF 'PRABANDHA-SARAM.'

Sri Desika's authorship of 'Guruparampara-Saram', 'Rahasyatraya-Saram', 'Sara-Saram' and 'Dramidopanishat-Saram' is unquestionable. It would, however, appear to be grievously wrong to attribute to him the authorship of 'Prabandha-Saram'. The hymns of the great Azhvars are referred to by the Vaishnavites as 'Divya-Prabandham' and not merely as 'Prabandham'. It is therefore, inconceivable that Swami Desika with his extra-ordinary dovotion to the 'Divya Prabandham' would have lightly referred to it as 'Prabandham'. Further, 'Saram' means essence, but one is at a loss to find anything of this kind in the work in question. All that it contains is the enumeration of the place and date of birth of the Azhvars, their works, the number of stanzas in each and so on. It would be just as appropriate to call this 'Prabandha-Saram' as to call a work which merely details the number of chapters, Adikaranas, Suthras etc., in 'Sareeraka-Mimamsa.' and their authorship as 'Sareeraka-Sara'. This is, therefore, by no means comparable with the works of Sri Vedanta Desika bearing the terminal word 'Saram,' or of 'Gnana-Saram', 'Prameya-Saram' and Tatwa-Saram' of Arulalapperumal Emberumanar and Nadathoor Ammal. And yet, it is nauseating that the authorship of this work should have been foisted on Sri Desika by inserting the line 'வேதாந்தகுரு மொழிந்த ப்ரபந்தசாரம்' in the stanza itself to create a piece of internal evidence and set the seal of authenticity.

The opening line of the first song refers to the day (birth star), place and month in which the Azhvars came to this world (ஆழ்வார்களவதரித்த நாளூர் திங்கள்), a very strange and extra-oridnary presentation indeed! The place of birth could be mentioned either before or after, but should not the month be mentioned first and then the particular star in that month? Metrically, " திங்கள் நாளூர் " would by no means be wrong. And yet, this jumble is attributed to the great one. In the seventeenth song beginning with " கையகமென் " 'Ramanuja Nootrandadi' has not merely been included in the four thousand stanzas but its authorship has been attributed to Ramanuja himself, obviously, the work of a minor fry, who mistook 'Ramanuja-

Nootrandadi' as Ramanuja's own composition like unto 'Desika-Prabandham', which refers to Desika's own composition.

The lines " நானிலமுந்தான் வாழ நான்மறைகள் தாம்வாழ, மாநகரில் மாறன் மறை வாழ" are apparently meant to match with " அடியார்கள் வாழ அரங்க நகர் வாழ, சடகோபன் தண்டமிழ் நூல் வாழ" in the time-honoured Tenkalai 'Vazhi Thirunamam'. Which is the locality referred to as " மாநகர் "? If "மாறன் மறை", that is, 'Thiruvoimozhi' is to flourish in 'மாநகர்' does it refer to 'Then Thirupperai' (தென்திருப்பேரை adjoining Azhvar Thirunagari) which has been spoken of in Thiruvoimozhi as 'மாநகர்'? Should not the benedecite cover the whole universe as in "Sarvadesa-dasa-kaleshu"? Even if the author of the later composition is chary of invoking the word ' அரங்க நகர்' occuring in the earlier composition, he could have very well framed the line as: " மாநிலத்தில் மாறன் மறை வாழ ".

In Sri Desika's esoteric works such as "Samparadaya-parisuddhi", there are Slokas as well as Tamil songs at the beginning, middle and the end. These songs forming an integral part of the respective works do not and cannot constitute separate Prabandhas and yet these have been culled out and styled as 'Desika-Prabandhas'. It is also claimed that these have been in vouge as separate prabandhas from *time immemorial!* The expression *underlined* can- however, take us hardly more than 150 years back, against the succinct back-ground furnished in the foregoing pages of this treatise.

THE MOOT POINTS

Sri Nigamanta Mahaguru (Desika) was the direct disciple or Kidambi Appullar, also known as Athreya Ramanujacharya. The thanian (salutation) composed by Sri Desika in adoration of his Guru was the majestic Sloka: "Yasmadasmabhiretat Yatipati-kathita-prakthana-prakriyodyath............". (யஸ்மாதஸ்மாபிரேதத் யதிபதிகதிதப்ராக்தந-ப்ரக்ரியோத்யத்) But this has been consigned to the limbo of oblivion and another, reading as "Namo Ramanujaryaya Vedantartha-pradayine, Atreya Padmanabharya-sutayagunasaline (" நமோ ராமாநுஜார்யாய வேதாந்தார்த்த-ப்ரதாயிநே, ஆத்ரேய பத்மநாபார்யஸுதாய குணசாலிநே") smuggled in, long after. The authorship of this 'Thanian' and the point of time at which it was composed are still moot points and the pointed queries raised, from time to time, by Ubhaya-Vedanta-Mahavidwan Sriman P. B. Annangaracharya Swami and others keen on getting the correct postion in this regard, have, therefore, remained unanswered, so far. The Thanian of an Acharya is usually compiled by a disciple of his and true to this tradition, Sri Desika had composed the Thanian 'Yasmadabheretath ......' but it has been

substituted by "Namo Ramanujaryaya....' of apocryphal origin, only to compete with the Tenkalai salutation of Thiruvoimozhi Pillai, by his disciple, Sri Manavala Mahamuni, which runs as "Namas Srisailanathaya Kunteenagara-janmane, prasada-labdha-parama-prapya-kainkarya-saline". It is claimed by the present-day Desika-bhaktas that there are two distinct 'Thanians' for Sri Desika, viz: 'Sriman Venkatanatharyah Kavitharkika-kesari, Vedantacharya varyo me sannidhatham sada hhridi' (ஸ்ரீமான் வேங்கடநாதார்ய: கவிதார்க்கிக கேஸரீ, வேதாந்தாசார்யவர்யோமே ஸந்நிதத்தாம் ஸதா ஹ்ருதி.) and 'Ramanuja-daya-patram gnana-vairagya-bhushanam..........', (ராமானுஜதயாபாத்ரம் ஜ்ஞானவைராக்ய பூஷணம்) the latter being distinctly known as 'Patra-Thanian', that is to say, the hymn with which the 'Divya-Prabandham' recitation is to be commenced by these votaries. To give the latter a flavour of antiquity and a semblance of authenticity, the innovators have brought out a Sloka denoting the point of time at which the latter 'Thanian' was born, although there is no such Sloka indicating precisely the time when the earlier 'Thanian' came into being. In the Connemara Library, Madras and Government Oriental Manuscripts libraries, Sri Desika's works preserved in Kadjan leaves (long before the age of printing) bear only one 'Thanian', namely, the time-honoured and universally accepted "Sreeman Venkatanatharyah ...." Thanian. Even the commentaries on Desika's works printed and published quite some years ago by some Vadakalai gentlemen, who have had no part or lot in temple disputes and litigations, carry only this 'Tanian' and not the other. It is only in later editions, the court-birds have smuggled in the contentious 'Ramanuja-daya pathram.....", on account of which, there have been

(1) serious disputes in certain pilgrim centres;

(2) convictions, by law courts, of persons who attempted and or intended to utter it in certain temples;

and (3) forfeiture of temple rights by certain Vadakalai gentlemen of the Thathacharya clan who actively associated themselves with this 'Thanian'.

It has already been established beyond the shadow of a doubt that this Thanian was not in vouge during Sri Desika's life-time, or till four hundred odd years thereafter. The illustrious line of the Poorvacharyas began with Sriman Nathamuni and concluded with Sri Manavala Mahamuni. The 'Srisailesa-daya-patra' thanian in honour of Sri Manavala Mahamuni was composed by Lord Ranganatha Himself and recited by Him in the guise of a little lad before the august assembly of the Sri Vaishnavas of Srirangam, at the conclusion of a year-long discourse on 'Bhagavad-Vishayam' *par excellence*,

by Sri Manavala Mahamuni. By His divine sanction, rather command, this hymn is being sung both at the commencement and end of the proceedings in the temples, from that day onwards. A 'pathram' of this kind has not been dedicated to any other Acharya and, in fact, this 'Pathram' has been in vogue since then in all the temples including the temple at the birth place of Sri Desika, in view of the special sanctity attached to it. The ardent devotees of Sriman Nathamuni do not want a separate 'Pathram' for him; likewise, none of the devotees shall demand a separate 'Pathram' for any other Acharya in the hierarchy, no matter what his predelictions or depth of devotion for that particular Acharya might be. Such being the case, devotees of Sri Vedanta Desika, who adorns the said hierarchy cannot and should not demand a separate, 'Pathram', dedicated to him and invent one for the nonce.

Apart from the impropriety of introducing a new 'Pathram' dedicated to Sri Vedanta Desika alone, of all the Acharyas, the manner in which it has been composed is itself anything but complimentary and can hardly flatter the innovators for all their special efforts. In 'Ramanuja-daya-pathram', the first word is said to refer to Kidambi Appullar, the immediate Guru of Sri Desika. Whether it refers to the said Guru or Bhagavad Ramanujacharya himself, it should not have been blandly mentioned without any prefix of respect like 'Sri Ramanuja' or 'Srimad Ramanujacharya'. A pandit tries to justify it by saying that the word 'dayapathram', which follows, can go well only with the word 'Ramanuja'. There can be no compulsion of this sort unless it be that every word in this sloka should match with "Srisailesa daya pathram..........". It could have been worded as "Srimad-Ramanujacharya-Sripadabja-madhuvratam", "Sri Ramanuja-Sooreendra-pada-pankeruhasritam" ("ஸ்ரீமத் ராமாநுஜாசார்ய-ஸ்ரீபாதாப்ஜ-மதுவ்ரதம்" "ஸ்ரீராமாநுஜஸூரீந்த்ர-பதபங்கேருஹாச்ரிதம்"). Even if the word 'dayapathram' is inevitable, it could be: 'Srimad-Ramanujacharya-daya-pathram dayanidhim' or 'Athreya-Srimadacharya-daya-pathram Maha Gurum'. ("ஸ்ரீமத் ராமாநுஜாசார்ய-தயாபாத்ரம் தயாநிதிம்", "ஆத்ரேய ஸ்ரீமதாசார்ய-தயாபாத்ரம் மஹாகுரும்") Further, unlike 'Srisailesa daya pathram' which is chanted by Thenkalai Vaishnavas on all occasions, 'Ramanuja-daya-pathram' is chanted by the segregationists only for fomenting trouble in the temples, while the time-honoured 'Sriman Venkatanatharya' Thanian, with its majestic strides, is being chanted on all other occasions. Isn't it curious, if not funny, that, barring this 'Pathram' or the opening hymn, all the other 'Thanians' beginning with 'Lakshminatha Samarambham' (லக்ஷ்மீநாதஸமாரம்பாம்) and ending with 'Bhootam Sarascha Mahadahvaya............pranatosmi nityam' (பூதம்ஸரச்ச ...... ப்ரணதோஸ்மி நித்யம்) are exactly the same as those followed by the Thenkalais? The said string of Slokas (Thanians) was evolved as follows: Koorathazhvan

introduced the scheme of chanting the first three Slokas, 'Lakshmi Natha', 'Yo nityam Atchyuta' and 'Matha pitha yuvathayah' before reciting the 'Divya-Prabandhams'. Prior to that, only the Thanian or Thanians of the respective Azhvars used to be sung preceding the recital of their hymns. The Sloka 'Bhootam Sarascha' was added by Sri Parasara Bhattar at the end. The 'Thanians' were sung in this order at the commencement of the recitals, which ended with "Pallandu Pallandu..................appanchajanniyamum pallande" (பல்லாண்டு பல்லாண்டு..................அப்பாஞ்சசன்னியமும் பல்லாண்டே) without being followed by any Thanian and Vazhi Thirunaamam. It was during Sri Manavala Mahamuni's time that 'Srisailesa dayapathram' Thanian was introduced in the glorious setting mentioned earlier. Not only that; it headed the list of the other 'Thanians' and thus went ahead of 'Lakshi-Natha' Thanian and was recited at the end also, followed by the Vazhi Thirunamam. This has been going on in an unbroken succession and none ever questioned this as an innovation. This is being followed by the present-day 'Vadakalais' also, except for the adaptation of a new 'Pathram' corresponding to 'Srisailesa-daya-pathram'. Likewise, towards the end "Sarvadesa-dasakaleshu........Sriman Sriranga-Sriyam anupadravam anudinam samvardhaya" (ஸர்வதேசதசகாலேஷு............ஸ்ரீமன் ஸ்ரீரங்கச்ரியமநுபத்ரவாமநுதிநம் ஸம்வர்த்தய) are common to both and what follows this in the other Camp is but an adaptation of 'Namas Srisailanathaya Kunthee-nagara-janmane..............." (நம: ஸ்ரீசைலநாதாய குந்தீநகரஜன்மனே) etc., as already pointed out. It deserves to be specially noted that even those, who have engaged themselves in interminable transgressions and inroads into the even tenor of worship at the Srirangam and other temples conforming to Thenkalai mode of worship and the resultant legal proceedings, continually operating to disturb the tranquillity of 'Sriranga-Sree' pray unwittingly as "Sriman Sriranga-sriyam *anupadravam* anudinam Samvardhaya". The word 'anupadravam' means freedom from troubles. The troubles have taken different shapes from time to time, namely, Muslim invasion, onslaught on Sri Vaishnavas, sectarian rancour leading to litigations, so on and so forth. Is it not strange and grossly inconsistent with the propaganda carried on by those in the other Camp, that Sri Ramanuja and Koorathazhvan had contrived ingloriously to get the Vadakalai caste-mark, worn by all the temple servants and found on the walls etc., in the Srirangam temple, into Thenkalai caste-mark? Of course, the reforms introduced by Sri Ramanuja pertained to the ritualistic proceedings of the temple and the mode of worship and not to the caste-mark, and these reforms still hold the field, true to our daily prayer "Ramanujarya-divyagna vardhatam abhivardhatam".

In the laudatory hymn (Vazhi thirunamam) in adoration of Sri Ramanuja's greatness and achievements, there is a line: "Blessed be he, who

set right (channelised) the entire wealth of Lord Ranganatha enshrined in Thennarangam (Srirangam)" (தென்னரங்கன் செல்வம் முற்றும் திருத்திவைத்தான் வாழியே). There is, however, a hostile propaganda afloat, trying to make out that the only reform effected by Sri Ramanuja was to change the caste-mark from 'Vadakalai' into 'Thenkalai' in the Srirangam temple and the residents of that place, that efforts are now being made by the persons in the opposite Camp to restore the temples, weaned away in this manner, to their former status and that their attempts have borne fruit, in a few cases! These very persons have thus sought to give free vent to their unmasked aversion to Sri Ramanuja and the glorious 'Ramanuja-Darsana', as such. It is this deep-seated antipathy of theirs for Sri Ramanuja that has driven them to the inexorable length of thinking in terms of a separate 'Desika Darsana' and setting up institutions for its propagation. Was it such an arch-enemy of these Desika-bhaktas that Sri Desika loved and adored even more than God Himself? Has not Sri Desika attributed God's greatness to His being worshipped by Sri Ramanuja? As regards the vast array of the Sri Vaishnava Acharyas, Sri Desika maintains that the glory and greatness of the Acharyas who preceded Sri Ramanuja were due to their connection with his head, while the Acharyas who succeeded him acquired a similar distinction through their link with his feet. In his 'Yatiraja Saptati', Sri Desika had acknowledged that his own intellectual attainments and spiritual greatness were the outcome of his glorious connection with Sri Ramanuja and incessant praise of his auspicious qualities. Again in his 'Nyasa-Tilaka', Sri Desika expressed his grateful thanks to the Supreme Lord for having made him the disciple of no less than the great-grand-son of Kidambi Achchan, a very intimate disciple of Sri Ramanuja. That Sri Desika was perfectly sanguine of his salvation through his contact with Sri Ramanuja, however remote, has already been brought out in Section I. The crusade against Sri Ramanuja launched upon by a section, as above, therefore, cuts the crusaders adrift from Sri Desika himself and hence it is nothing but rank fanaticism, as defined in the concluding part of Section I. It is indeed difficult to predict where exactly it would land them and how far they would go. How else can we understand a recent outburst, indulged in by a Vadakalai Pandit during his discourse on 'Thiruppavai' at Bombay? He is reported to have thundered, as it were, before a bewildered audience about the atrocious transformation of the idol of Sri Desika into that of Sri Ramanuja, in the temple of Lord Venkateswara at the Tirumalai Hills, by investing it with 'Tridanda' and the Saffron robe. The said pandit is stated to have significantly added that the idol in question differs substantially from that of Sri Ramanuja, enshrined in other places with the palms joined in a worshipping posture, and is seen with the right palm in a preceptor's pose and the left holding the sacred text (Kadjan leaves) but hidden within the folds of

the Saffron robe. As if to add insult to injury, he is stated to have invited every one of his listeners to take a trip to the Tirumalai Hills and verify the truth of his statements and even gone to the length of offering to bear the to and fro expenses, by plane, of any two persons, who would fulfil this mission. A daring canard and an awful blasphemy! To call it a mere white lie will be a terrible understatement. The myth is exploded in Section III, below, along with several others.

(Section III)

MYTH EXPLODED

The sky is indeed the limit for malignant distortions, such as the one, referred to in the concluding part of Section II, above. Or, shall we call it the height of halucination or the bottom-most depth of depravity? Alas! the so-called Desika-bhaktas have not even taken pains to study and assimilate the works of Sri Desika. In fact, none of them could ever come anywhere near Ubhaya Vedanta Maha Vidwan P. B. Annangaracharya Swami of Sri Kanchi, in this regard. The reader shall not mistake this statement as mere hero-worship or a partisan attitude, if only he cares to go through the numerous publications of Sri P.B. A. Swami on Vedanta Desika and his works. He will then see for himself how the Swami has, as it were, taken a deep plunge into them and revelled to an extent unknown to any other scholar, with the result that he (Swami) could make his own solid contribution to the correction of mis-readings in the texts, here and there, which had crept in down the years and bring out the beauty of the works, which could scarcely be noticed by even the most eminent among those in the other Camp. Granting that the busy reader can hardly find the time for such intensive study, it would suffice if he went through at least pages 50–54 of "Excerpts from Sri P. B. A. Swami's autobiography", a publication of the Grantha Mala Office of Kancheepuram. And now getting back to the Pandit, who harangued in Bombay to his heart's fill, he is hardly worth his salt, not being conversant with the Sloka in Sri Desika's 'Yatiraja Saptati':

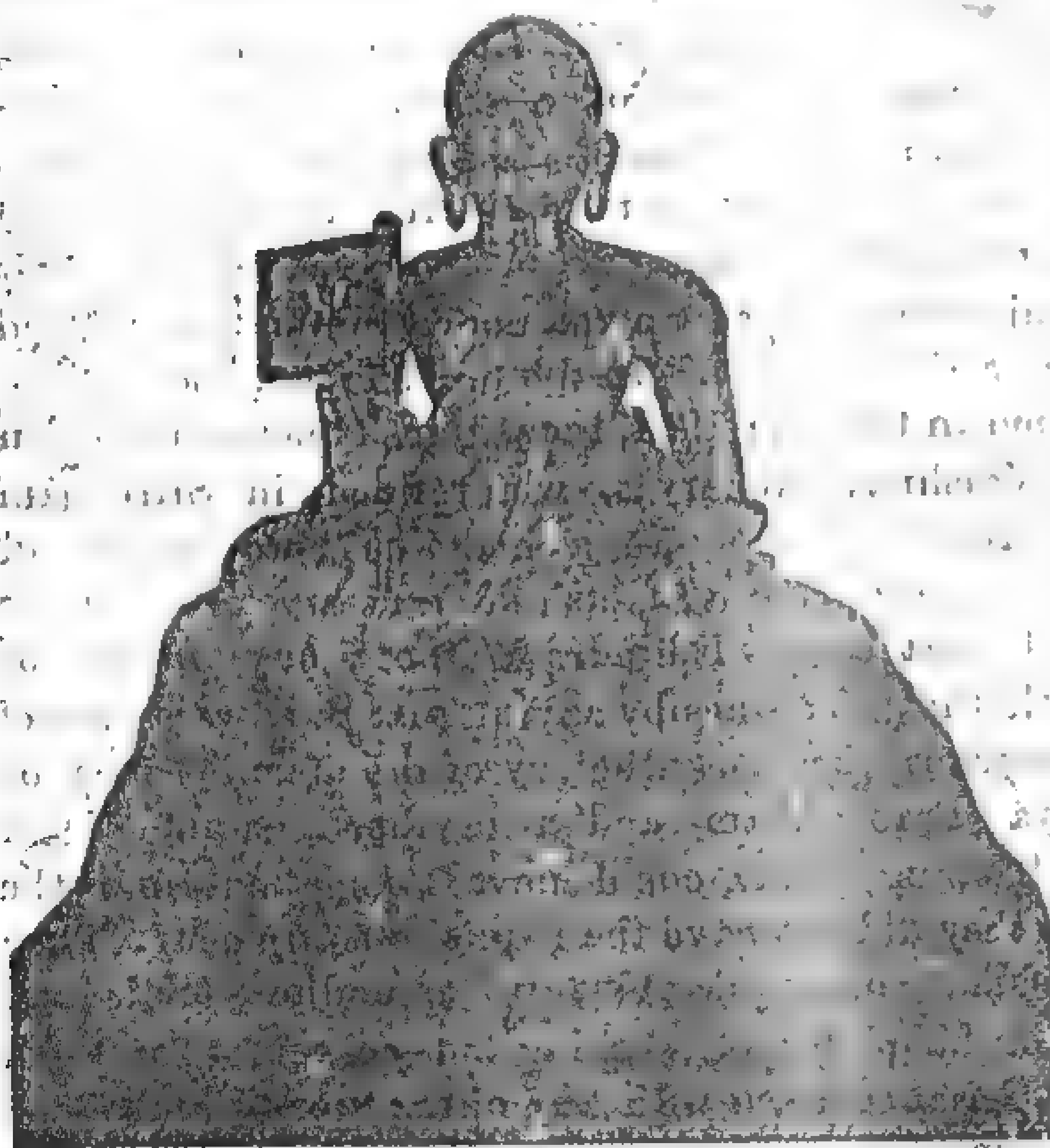
"Udgrihnateemupanishatsu nigoodhamartham
Chitthe nivesayithum alpadhiyam swayam nah;
Pasyema Lakshmanamuneh pratipanna-hastham
Unnidrapadmasubhagam upadesa-mudram".

உத்க்ருஹ்ணதீமுபநிஷத்ஸு நிகூடமர்த்தம்
சித்தே நிவேசயிதும் அல்பதியாம் ஸ்வயம் ந:;
பச்யேம லக்ஷ்மணமுநே: ப்ரதிபந்நஹஸ்தாம்
உந்நித்ரபத்மஸுபகாமுபதேசமுத்ராம்.

How dare he make a sweeping statement regarding the customary pose of the idol of Sri Ramanuja, all over? Does he know the different postures of the Azhvars and Acharyas in the different pilgrim centres? Has he ever been to Kancheepuram and worshipped the idols of Sri Ramanuja there (Moolavar and Utsavar)? No need to wait for an answer. He has already betrayed his ignorance. But then, why should he link up the idols of Sri Ramanuja and Sri Desika alone, of all the Azhvar-Acharyas? Is it because Sri Desika is reputed to be the very incarnation of the holy Bell of Lord Venkateswara? Is it correct to hold, as is being maintained in some quarters, that a bronze bell (or a silver bell) physically entered the womb of Sri Desika's mother and stayed inside for full twelve years and emerged in the form of Sri Desika? Well, Sri Desika's own version of this in his 'Sankalpa Suryodaya' has been mentioned at the very beginning of this treatise. The word 'utprekshyate' in the concerned text is significant. While referring to the greatness of the Azhvars and Acharyas, it is being said that so and so is Adisesha incarnate, Garuda reborn, a reproduction of Vishvaksena and so on. Would it involve the physical entry of these Nitya Soories (the Eternal Heroes) in the wombs of the respective mothers on Earth? Had the holy Bell of Lord Venkateswara disappeared into the womb of the venerable lady and been lurking inside for as many as twelve years, could it have been beyond the knowledge of the people who lived then? Why should the laudatory hymn be worded as 'Tat-ghantamsah athava bhaveth................vitharkyayasthu mangalam', (தத் கண்டாம்ச அதவா பவேத் ....விதர்க்யாயாஸ்து மங்களம்) indicating that it was the aura of the holy Bell and not the Bell itself that came in the person of Desikar? If, however, adequate evidence could be gathered and presented to prove the physical entry of the Bell into the mother's womb, twelve long years before the birth of the baby, it has to be accepted with all the reverence which it demands. As a matter of fact, it is only the impious sceptics among us, who would discredit the Puranic stories such as the emergence of Sage Agastya from the bosom of a bowl, his having gulped down the entire oceanic waters and arrested the vertical growth of the Vindhya mountains and things of that sort.

The aforesaid Pandit is stated to have consoled himself and his Bombay audience by saying that even though the idol of Sri Vedanta Desika at Thirumalai has been mischievously transformed, the evil-doers cannot tamper with the 'Namavali' of Sri Venkatesa, which reads: Krishnakhyavipra-Vedantadesikatva-pradaya cha". (க்ருஷ்ணாக்யவிப்ர-வேதாந்ததேசிகத்வ-ப்ரதாய) Oh, what a pity! Far from establishing the physical re-incarnation of the Holy Bell, this only means that Lord Venkateswara conferred Vedantadesikatvam on a Brahmin named Krishna Sarma. The mountain of labour brought forth a

mouse and the poor Pandit has been at pains to establish by this that one Krishnachar was reborn as Desika. c f. "Vinayakam prakurvano rachayamasa vanaram" (விநாயகம் ப்ரகுர்வாணோ ரசயாமாஸ வாநரம்). The distinguished Pandit, who sought and acquired distinction the wrong way, and others of his ilk, will do well to note that at dawn, every day, the 'Suprabhata', 'Prapathi' and 'Mangalasasana' of Sri Venkatesa are being chanted in the temple at Tirumalai, in a chorus by a composite group of Thenkalais, Vadakalais, Madhvas, and Smarthas, right from the days of Sri Manavala Mahamuni. Coming across the lines "Sowmyopayanthrimunina mama darsithau tho" (ஸௌம்யோபயந்த்ருமுநிநா மம தர்சிதௌ தே) and "Srimad Sundarajamatru-Muni-manasa-vasine" (ஸ்ரீமத் ஸுந்தரஜாமாத்ருமுநிமானஸவாஸிநே) in Slokas 15 and 13 of "Sri Venkatesa Prapathi" and "Sri Venkatesa Mangalasasana" respectively, containing handsome reference to the great Mamunigal, at whose instance these Stotras were composed and channelised into the chorus chanting as above, some perverted persons refrained from chanting these Slokas, for a while. These persons had to be admonished and got round by that doyen, Srimad Kapisthalam Desikacharya Swami, who was then flourishing in Tirupati. The malignant Pandit might as well go to the Tirumalai Hills, instead of footing the bill of two others for air-lifts, and there listen to the impressive chorus chanting of these Slokas before day-break and also have a close look at the idol of Sri Ramanuja. Well, if he is not prepared to go, here is the target of his attack coming straight to him on the wings of the ever-obliging and condescending Editor of 'Sri Ramanujan'. It is only to be hoped that his vision will now cease to be blurred and bedevilled, so as to enable him to see that the left palm of Sri Ramanuja holds nothing and is left uncovered.



Sri Ramanuja (Tirumalai)

SRI BHASHYA DISCOURSES.

Lies are prolific breeders and a single lie weaves a tissue of lies around, in no time. The slanderous allegation that Sri Desika was hated by the contemporary Sri Vaishnavas of Srirangam, and, therefore, he had to keep aloof from them, has been dealt with, *in extenso* and countered effectively in Sections I and II. Stretching the allegation further to its logical necessity, it has been held in those quarters that Sri Desika had all along just a couple of disciples, namely, his own son and one other by name, Brahmatantra Swami. The first part of the allegation having already been demolished, the second part collapses, *ipso facto*. Moreover, Swami Desika has said, in his 'Sankalpa-suryodaya', that he had discoursed on 'Sri Bhashya' (Sri Ramanuja's illuminating commentary on the Brahma Sutras) thirty times over—"Trimsadvaram Sravita-Sareeraka-Bhashyah" (த்ரிம்சத்வாரம் ச்ராவிதசாரீரகபாஷ்ய:). Isn't it ludicrous to say or even suggest that these discourses were delivered to the same two persons, thirty times over? Surley, a good many Sri Vaishnavas thirsting for knowledge and holding Swami Desika in great reverence should have listened to these discourses and reaped a rich harvest. In the preface to a book on the life-history of Desika, published in the year 1944, the writer, launched upon an unrelenting attack on the Sri Vaishnava Acharyas, who resided in Srirangam during Sri Desika's time, freely indulging in a malicious propaganda of uninhibited virulence. A gross perversion of facts and travesty of truth, it has naturally left a crop of bitterness behind. Without any qualm or compunction, he would belittle the great ones by saying that they were men of meagre learning, at best conversant with the anthology of the Tamil songs of the Azhvars known as 'Divya Prabandham' and altogether ignorant of 'Sri Bhashya' and other Sanskrit Sastras. They could never come out into the open, for Sastraic debates, as they did not have the requisite equipment. They were terribly jealous of Desika and subjected him to endless trials and tribulations and Sri Desika, on his part, had nothing but contempt for them and never mingled with them. Not satisfied with any of the works extant on Saint Nammazhvar's 'Thiruvoimozhi' (Bhagavadvishayam), Sri Desika wrote out an elaborate commentary, known as 'Nigama Parimalam', and made it available to his disciples—all these pains just for the sake of his aforesaid two disciples? but, alas! it became extinct they say, soon afterwards. How could such a great treasure get lost, so soon? For want of diffusion? Sri P. B. A. Swami pointed out there and then, the hollowness of all these cantankerous statements, bereft of even an atom of truth. Many of these points have already been dealt with, at some length. in Sections I and II ante.

It would, however, be profitable to summarise, at this stage the position in this regard. It was only at the kind invitation of the Sri Vaishnava Acharyas of Srirangam that Sri Desika went to Srirangam and settled down there. That he had very good relations with them during his long stay in Srirangam could be seen from the manner in which he pined for his return to their midst during the troublesome days of Muslim invasion, when he was away. In his 'Abhithistava', he refers to them as mutual well-wishers and, in the last verse of his 'Bhagavaddhyana Sopanam', he has paid a glowing tribute to the erudite scholars and art-lovers of Srirangam, who had imparted clarity to his thoughts and enabled him to develop a facile and pleasing style. As regards the clarity of thought, gratefully acknowledged by him as above, attention of the reader is invited to Sri Ramanujan 217. Sri Desika had the requisite humility and intellectual honesty in abundance and always kept himself open to correction—corrections which he incorporated in his writings, from time to time, in one form or the other. And now, a word about the non-existent 'Nigama-Parimalam'. Even assuming that Sri Vedanta Desika had brought out this glowing commentary, which, unfortunately, could not benefit posterity, it would not be correct to say that it was compiled by him out of his dislike for, or disgust of the other commentaries, 'Bhagavad-Vishayam', etc., which were accessible to him then. The truth of this will be clear not only from Sri Ramanujan 217, but also from the fact that Sri Desika's commentary on Thiruppanazhvar's 'Amalanadipiran', known as "Munivahana-bhogam", does not contain a word of condemnation, disrespect or disapproval of the other commentaries of the 'Poorvacharyas', already extant. Fortunately, all these commentaries are available to us for our edification and enjoyment.

KALI'S REVENGE

And now, look at the tirade indulged, in by one Mr. E. T. Srinivasan, through the hospitable pages of "Sriranganatha Paduka", a monthly religious journal, blessed and patronised by H. H. Srimad Andavan Swami, under the caption "Kavitharkika-Simham, the conqueror of Kali". (கலியைக்கடிந்திடும் கவிதார்க்கிக ஸிம்ஹம்). As every one knows, Kali Yuga, the last of the cycle of four Yugas beginning with 'Krita, is characterised by rank materialism, abysmal ignorance and sin. But the advent of Sri Ramanuja dealt a mortal blow to these dark trends of 'Kali', which could no longer spread its tentacles and cast its evil spell. There was a return, as it were, to the golden era of Krita yuga, with the emergence of Ramanuja Divakara, the brilliant sun-rise of Sri Vaishnavism. This naturally provoked the unbounded wrath of Kali-Purusha, whose discomfiture over the collapse of his short-lived sway

is understandable. It is all right, thus far. Here then starts the unpardonable mischief and despicable rant. E. T. S. (ஈ. தே. ஸ்ரீ) has conjured up a vision of his own—an imaginary meeting of Sri Ramanuja and Kalipurusha when the latter accosted the former and accused him of cold-blooded murder (of Kali); Sri Ramanuja tried his level best to talk his interlocutor into reason and placate him, but did not succeed; on the other hand, it only infuriated the strange visitor, all the more and he swore vengeance with all the vehemence at his command, declaring that he would unleash some of his evil forces, which will masquerade as the votaries of Sri Ramanuja and do their utmost to defile and distort the Visishtadvaita system of philosophy, so well nurtured by him, and throw it into terrific disarray, even if it was not destroyed altogether. Questioned by Sri Ramanuja as to how the end in view would be accomplished by the Kali Purusha, the latter shouted frantically that:

(1) he would proclaim from the house-tops that God is a great lover of the sins of His subjects, who should therefore persist in sinning as much as they could, so as to please Him;

(2) he would assert that Maha Lakshmi, the Divine Consort, is no more than an ordinary Jeeva;

(3) he would make people believe that the Azhvars were also ordinary persons steeped in the bondage of Samsara and caught in the whirlpool of birth and death;

(4) he would ask people not to resort to 'Saranagati' or surrender at the foot of the Lord, on the ground that it is hardly necessary;

(5) he would emphasise the futility of going through the rituals enjoined by the Sastras, such as 'Ashtaka', 'Anvashtaka', 'Mahalaya paksha' etc., ceremonies and other observances decreed by the Vedas and force the people to give up these rites and rituals,

and (6) other odds and miscellany.

Sri Ramanuja, however, remained unperturbed and confidently asserted that the 'Visishtadvaita' system originated from the Lord Himself and if anything went wrong with it, He would, as already declared by him in Bhagavadgita, incarnate suitably, to retrieve and resuscitate its glory. Sri Ramanuja even foretold that, for this very purpose, Lord Venkatesa would incarnate in 'Thiruthanka' (a suburb of Sri Kanchi) in Viswamitra Gotra and that wherever the name and fame of that 'Avatara-Purusha' permeated, Kali and his accomplices would have no foot-hold whatsoever, and that they could parade their wares elsewhere only.

The imaginary dialogue, as above, can hardly be appreciated as a nice piece of fiction or the flight of sweet and innocent fancy. It is, in fact, a part of the cantankerous campaign of vilification of the 'Poorvacharyas' freely resorted to by those in the other Camp. All the Acharyas, in between Sri Ramanuja and Sri Vedanta Desika, have been covertly put down as the evil forces of Kali, while Vedanta Desika has been depicted as the redeemer of 'Visishtadvaita' and restorer of its pristine purity. A grotesque misrepresentation, of course not in good taste, and surely offending against all sense of decency and decorum. However, when the reader goes through the rest of this treatise, he can perceive that the boot is actually on the other leg, in so far as all the distortions are from that end. It is hoped that he will also have a clear-cut idea of Sri Desika's own views on all these topics.

I. LORD AS 'DOSHA-BHOGYA' OR LOVER OF SINS

That the Lord is a "Dosha-bhogya" has been pin-pointed by the Sastras. But none of the Acharyas has ever said or advocated that, on this account, everybody should commit only sins, looking upon them as the grist to the Divine mill. No preceptor worth the name would advocate lassitude and licentiousness and be hypocritical enough to instil in his disciples a sense of false security. To use a familiar expression, though not in a spirit of rivalry, let the lion be bearded in its own den. The position in this regard shall now be clarified and the correct perspective furnished through the works of Sri Desika's Acharyas and Sri Desika himself.

Of the many attributes of God, 'Vatsalya' is one. In his ecstatic prose-poem known as 'Saranagati-gadyam', the hymn of self-surrender, Sri Ramanuja refers to this outstanding trait of the Lord very often. Sri Srutaprakasika Bhattar, who wrote a commentary on this gadyam, has defined 'Vatsalya' as 'Vatsalyam nama *dosheshu gunatvabuddhih*' (வாத்ஸல்யம் நாம தோஷேஷு குணத்வபுத்தி:). Again, in his commentary on Sri Bhashya, known as 'Srutaprakasika', he has stated 'Sambandha-viseshanvitheshu preethis snehah yasya vipakah asthane bhayasankithvam doshanavabhasah *doshepi gunatva-buddhirityadyaah*' (ஸம்பந்த விசேஷாந்விதேஷு ப்ரீதி: ஸ்நேஹ:, யஸ்ய விபாக: அஸ்தாநே பயசங்கித்வம், தோஷாநவபாஸ:, தோஷேபி குணத்வபுத்தி: இத்யாத்யா:). Samanvayadhikarana Srutaprakasika also refers to '*Dosheshvapi gunatva-buddhih*' (தோஷேஷ்வபி குணத்வபுத்தி:). That means, the same gloss throughout. Love, specially treated in its relation as Lover and the Beloved, has several facets, such as the lover getting apprehensive of danger to the beloved even when there is absolutely no room for such apprehension, or being blind to the

faults and blemishes in the beloved, or even after perceiving such faults and blemishes, giving them a good turn and viewing them benevolently, changing, as it were, their very complexion. It is this last-mentioned aspect that has been underlined in the above glossary. This can occur or hold good only when love transcends all limitations; otherwise, the normal tendency is to abhor and condemn sins and short-comings and not to condone them, much less feel attracted to them. A homely example handled by Srutaprakasikacharya, in this context, is that of the cow, generally known for its fastidious dislike for dirt, licking fondly the organic matter sticking to the body of its young one, just born—"Yatha Sadyah-prasoothayah dhenor vatse" (யதா ஸத்ய: ப்ரஸூதாயா: தேனோர்வத்ஸே). It is this extra-ordinary love that is known as 'Vatsalya'.

It might be argued, that while the existence of this trait, namely, 'dosha-bhogyatva' in the Lord is not disputed or denied, undue emphasis should not be laid on this, lest we should be tempted to commit more and more transgressions, deliberately. The same risk is, however, involved even when we look at God as "Dosha-adarsi" (i.e.) one who scarcely notices the sins, or as one who readily forgives sins. A sense of fear of punishment for sins can spring only from the concept of God as an unrelenting punitive agency, who keeps count of all our transgressions and deals out the necessary punishment. But then, the possession of the remarkable trait of 'Vatsalya' by God cannot also be denied. The correct perspective can, therefore, be had only if the position is analysed, as shown below. None can confidently assert which of the numerous qualities of God will be exhibited at a given time, in respect of a specified individual. No individual can, therefore, be too sure that he shall always be chosen by God as the object for the exercise of His qualities of forgiveness and 'Vatsalya', as defined earlier. Knowing God as 'Kevalam svecchayaivaham prekshe kanchit kadachana' (கேவலம் ஸ்வேச்சயைவாஹம் ப்ரேக்ஷே கஞ்சித் கதாசந) i.e. as one, who is free to do whatever He likes, no God-conscious person will, therefore, commit transgressions knowingly. What, therefore, matters is not the mere existence of the trait of 'Vatsalya' in God, but the actual exercise of this quality in relation to a particular subject. Although fire can burn things out and sugar is sweet, the mere thought or mention of these qualities in fire and sugar will not cause burns or sweeten the tongue. It is the physical contact of these substances with the objects that avails. And now let us take the case of the Head of a big family. He bears great love for his family members and yet when they go wrong knowingly or otherwise, sometimes he punishes them and at other times he either takes no notice of them or he just forgives them. There might

also be a few occasions when he is inclined to construe that the so-called wrong done by a member of the family was not at all wrong but, on the other hand, a real piece of benefaction to the family. On this account, the members of the family cannot and will not become licentious and commit wilful transgressions, banking on the off-chance of their getting a favourable treatment at the hands of the Head of the family. This analogy is obviously most appropriate, for our purpose. 'Vatsalya' is by far the most excellent trait in the Lord, Who is no doubt the repository of innumerable auspicious qualities. That Saint Nammazhvar extolled this quality only when he addressed the Lord as நிகரில் புகழாய்! (of incomparable fame and greatness) has been brought out by the great Acharyas and yet there is quite a lot of loose and flippant talk, which has lately contaminated even a journal like "Sri Ranganatha Paduka". It is indeed most cruel on the part of these people to say, (1) that the Thennacharyas revel in committing sins and hope to please the Lord thereby, like unto the offering of sweetened rice, boiled in milk, and (2) indulge in cheap jibes that *"The pretending prapanna gloats over his sins as saviours and gets confirmed in his spiritual indolence—no God can save him. His may be a catching system but it cannot be true" and things of this sort. The chief aim of the exalted 'Emberumanar Darsanam' is to establish a God of bliss and love, a God of attributes, possessing a multitude of auspicious qualities, each one of which is of unlimited dimensions (Anavadhika-athisaya), as against a God, devoid of attributes, spoken of by the others. Saint Nammazhvar's 'Thiruvoimozhi' opens with a characterisation of God as the essence of all blissfull perfections, silencing, right at the very start, those philosophising on a 'Nirguna Brahma'—an abstract God, devoid of attributes. Of all the good qualities in a person, 'Vatsalya' (i.e.) the trait, which enables him to see good in evil and thereby love even the evil-doers, is considered to be the very best. It is our great good luck that, even in our midst, we see, now and then, here and there, persons possessing this glorious trait, in some measure. How then can it be absent in the Supreme Lord, the very personification of Bliss and Love? To deny Him this attribute is to deny Him all the other auspicious qualities as well and thus walk straight into the pavilion of the advocates of a formless, shapeless, colourless, odourless God and become the target of the Sloka in Swami Desika's 'Sankalpa Suryodaya' (2-92) "Yadi Bhaskara-Yadavaprakasau nigmanta-sthiti-nirnaya-praveenau, aparaih kimivaparaddha-maryaih ayathabhashana-chathuree dhureenaih". (யதி பாஸ்கரயாதவப்ரகாசௌ நிகமாந்தஸ்த்திதி நிர்ணயப்ரவீணௌ; அபரை: கிமிவாபராத்தமார்யை: அயதாபாஷண சாதுரீதுரீணை:"). 'Dosha' is of two entirely different kinds, namely, (1) the failings in our actions and (2) the stench and effluvium in the organic

* Extracted from 'Peeps into mysticism' by D. Ramaswami Ayyangar.

structure with its flesh and bones, nerve and muscles, guts and glands. In his 'Varadaraja panchasat', Sri Vedanta Desika says: "Audanvathe mahathi sadmani bhasamane slaghye cha divya-sadane thamasah parasmin, Anthah-kalebaramidam sushiram susookshmam jatham Kareesal katham adaranaspadam the?" (ஔதன்வதே மஹதி ஸத்மநி பாஸமானே ச்லாக்யே ச திவ்யஸதநே தமஸ: பரஸ்மிந். அந்த: கலேபரமிதம் ஸுஷிரம் ஸுஸூக்ஷ்மம் ஜாதம் கரீச கதமாதரணாஸ்பதம் தே.) Oh, Lord! how do you reside in my foul body, full of 'dosha', discarding the High Heavens and other exalted places? In his commentary on this Sloka that doyen of Karur avers that it is this 'Dosha-bhogyathva' that constitutes that massive trait known as 'Vatsalya'. Again, in his 'Dayaa Sathaka', Sri Desika says: "Mayi thishthathi......................aparadhasathaih apoornakukshih", (மயி திஷ்டதி .... அபராதசதை: அபூர்ணகுக்ஷி:), "Aalihya than niravaseesham alabdhathrupthih", (ஆலிஹ்ய தாந் நிரவசேஷம் அலப்தத்ருப்தி:) "Prabala-vrijina-prabhruta-bhrutaam" (ப்ரபலவ்ருஜிநப்ராப்ருதப்ருதாம்). 'Praabhrutam' means offering and this only echoes the text in Pillai Lokachariar's 'Srivachana-bhushanam'—தோஷமே பச்சையாக. It is now a case of 'biter bit' for poor E. T. S. and his team mates, as they find Sri Vedanta Desika himself, falling in with the so-called nefarious agents of 'Kali Purusha'.

II. RELEGATION OF SRI MAHA LAKSHMI TO THE POSITION OF AN ORDINARY JEEVA

Mr. E. T. Sriuivasan and his team mates, at all levels, go about saying that Sri Desika came into this world to counter the heresy indulged in, by the earlier Acharyas, relegating Sri Maha Lakshmi, the Divine Consort, to the level of an ordinary jeeva, thereby denying her exclusive importance and greatness, her immanence, her prowess as the independent granter of Moksha and her capacity to create the universe and ordain its functioning. It was only Sri Desika, who could dispel all such heretical notions, already spread out in this regard, and establish the real greatness of Sri Maha Lakshmi and restore her to her legitimate status. But then, let us examine what exactly were Sri Desika's views on the subject.

Sri Desika has nowhere spoken of Sri Maha Lakshmi's isolated glory, that is, her exclusive right or power to ordain the universe, as the independent granter of Moksha to the individual Jeevas, or as one possessing immanence The twelfth Sarga of his 'Yadavabhyudaya' relates to Rukmini, the spouse of Lord Krishna. The first two Slokas mention that Rukmini was the incarnation of Sri Maha Lakshmi. The third Sloka reads: "Sikhandakam nishprathimam Srutheenam Sringara-leelopama-visvakrityam, adheeyathe thanmithunam swabavath anyonya-jeevathumananya-bhogyam" (சிகண்டகம்

நிஷ்ப்ரதிமம் ச்ருதீநாம் ச்ருங்காரக்ருத்யோபம விச்வக்ருத்யம்; அதீயதே தந்மிதுநம் ஸ்வபாவாத் அந்யோந்ய-ஜீவாதுமநந்யபோக்யம்.) The fourth Sloka and onwards again deal with Rukmini exclusively. The crucial third Sloka, reproduced above, deals with "Sringara-leelopama-visvakrityam" as vesting in the 'Mithunam', the concerted action of the Lord and His spouse, as distinguished from the independent activity of Sri Maha Lakshmi alone, in regard to such matters as the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. The picture drawn by Sri Desika in the Sloka of his 'Sristhuthi' which reads: "Yatsankalpaath bhavathi Kamalo! yathra dehinyameesham janmasthema-pralaya-rachanaa jangamajangamaanaam, thath kalyanam kimapi yamimamekalakshyam samaadhau poornam thejas sphurathi bhavathee-padalaksha-rasankam" (யத்ஸங்கல்பாத் பவதி கமலே! யத்ர தேஹிநயமீஷாம் ஜன்ம-ஸ்த்தேமப்ரளயரசநா ஜங்கமாஜங்கமாநாம், தத் கல்யாணம் கிமபி யமிநாம் ஏகலக்ஷ்யம் ஸமாதௌ பூர்ணம் தேஜ: ஸ்ப்புரதி பவதீபாதலாக்ஷாரஸாங்கம்) reveals his thoughts with the utmost clarity. In a laudatory hymn on the Goddess, he could have said "jangamajangamanam janmasthemapralaya-rachanam *Indire! Thwam Karoshi*" (ஜங்கமாஜங்கமாநாம் ஜந்மஸ்த்தேமப்ரளயரசநாம் இந்திரே! தவம் கரோஷி.) But how could he refer to non-existent attributes? It is evident that, in composing this Sloka, Sri Desika followed in the footsteps of the Poorvacharyas like Koorathazhvan. c.f. the latter's "Aapavargikapadam sarvancha kurvan Harih, yasyaa veekshya mukham thadingitha-paradheeno vidhatthe". (ஆபவர்கிகபதம் ஸர்வஞ்ச குர்வந் ஹரி:, யஸ்யா வீக்ஷ்ய முகம் ததிங்கிதபராதீநோ விதத்தே.) In the chapter on 'Paripoorna-Brahmanubhava' of his 'Srimad Rahasyatraya-sara', Sri Desika has enumerated the insignia of the Lord, like unto the royal canopy and whisk as: Creator of the universe, Granter of Moksha, Sole sustainer of all beings, Supreme Ordainer, Master of all, Owner, Supporter and Director of the bodies of all the sentient and non sentient beings, He, Who is denoted by all words, Knower of all, Protector of all, Bestower of all results, Possessor of Lakshmi, the Helper, etc. It is significant that, in this vast array, causation of the universe (Jagat-karanatva) has been mentioned first and Lakshmi's role as the helper (Lakshmi-sahayatva) last, as two distinct predications. Even as the last-mentioned 'possession of Lakshmi' cannot be an attribute of Lakshmi, 'Jagat-karanatva', mentioned at the beginning cannot be attributed to her. In saying so, Sri Desika has been guided by the following commentary in 'Srutaprakasika' in respect of the line "Vinatha-vividha-bhootha-vratha-rakshaika-deeksho" (விநதவிவிதபூதவ்ராதரக்ஷைகதீக்ஷே) of 'Sri Bhashya'—"Jagat-karanatva–moksha-pradatve hi ragnah cchathra-chamaravath Brahmanah asaadhaarana chihnam". (ஜகத்காரணத்வ-மோக்ஷப்ரதத்வே ஹி ராஜ்ஞ ச்சத்ரசாமரவத் ப்ரஹ்மண: அஸாதாரணசிஹ்நம்) The fact that this has been repeated by Sri Desika in his commentary on 'Amalanadi-piran', known as 'Munivahana-Bhogam' while expatiating on the

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terminal word 'aadi' and again in his 'Nyaya-Sidhanjana, jeeva-parichheda', makes the position absolutely clear, leaving little or no room for any quibbling or equivocation. And yet, it is worthwhile re-inforcing this point by quoting the following text of Sri Desika's 'Rahasya Ratnavali': "ஸ்ரீமந்நாராயணனொருவனுமே ஸர்வஜீவர்களுக்கும் தஞ்சம் .... ஸர்வஸ்வாமிநியாய் ஸர்வேச்வரனுக்கு சேஷமாய் ஸஹதர்மசாரிணியான பெரிய பிராட்டியார் இத்தலையில் வாத்ஸல்யாதிசயத்தாலும் அத்தலையில் வால்லப்யாதிசயத்தாலும் புருஷகாரமாய்க் கொண்டு இஜ்ஜீவர்களுக்குத் தஞ்சமாகிறாள்." This makes out, in unmistaken terms, that the Lord is the granter of Moksha and that Lakshmi's role is that of a mediator or intercessor, who, by virtue of her privileged position, successfully pilots her wards and influences the Lord's dispensation of 'Moksha' to them. If Sri Maha Lakshmi could grant Moksha, all by herself, there was hardly any need for her to take upon herself the secondary role of an intercessor.

In his 'Lakshmi-Sahasram', Arasanipalai Venkatadhvari says that Lakshmi possesses immanence and that it would be very wrong to deny it. The commentator of these Slokas has cited the names of the Acharyas, who do not concede Maha Lakshmi's immanence and in this list stands included Sri Parasara Bhattar. Bur Sri Desika held Sri Parasara Bhattar in very great esteem and looked upon him as Sri Ramanuja, reborn, and there is therefore, no question of Desika ranging himself opposite to Parasara Bhattar. For a fuller appreciation of the position in this regard, the reader will do well to go through Sri P. B. A. Swami's works "Lakshmi-tatva-vinirnaya", "Sritatva Sodhanam" etc. In the works of Pillai Lokacharya and Manavala Mamunigal, the facts relating to Sri Maha Lakshmi are stated as a matter of course, but not presented as argumentation, as in the works of Srimad Venkatanatharya, who has categorically stated: "*Sa-Lakshmikasya* saamraajyam sarvathaa suprathishtitham" (ஸலக்ஷ்மீகஸ்ய ஸாம்ராஜ்யம் ஸர்வதா ஸுப்ரதிஷ்டிதம்.) Maha Lakshmi's greatness and glory (i.e.) 'Lakshmyas samrajyam' should never be spoken of, in isolation, but in conjunction with the Lord. In other words, her immanence etc., holds good only when she inheres in the person of the all-pervasive Lord.

Speaking about the prowess and glory of the Mithunam—the Divine Couple, one can't but recall what Maricha had told Ravana long, long back, by way of dissuading the latter to give up his sinister designs and to thereby avoid a confrontation with the combined might of Rama and Janaki, wielding infinitely larger power, in comparison with that exhibited by Rama singly in Maricha's earlier encounter—"Aprameyam hi thath thejah yasya saa Janakaatmajaa" (அப்ரமேயம் ஹி தத்தேஜ: யஸ்ய ஸா ஜநகாத்மஜா) a theme which came to be popularised later through a systematic handling by the great Acharyas like Alavandar, Koorathazhvan, Bhattar, Nanjeeyar, Nambillai,

Pillan, Srutaprakasikacharya, Vedanta Desika and others. It wouldn't therefore, be correct to say that it was Desika alone, who established the greatness of Sri Maha Lakshmi and pin-pointed that the Divine Couple at once constitute the 'Thathva', 'Hitha' and 'Purushartha'.

III. FACTS ABOUT THOSE GOD-INTOXICATED SOULS—THE AZHVARS

In chapter five of the XI Skandha of 'Sri Bhagavatam', are a few Slokas beginning with the line "Krithaadishu naraa Rajan Kalau icchanthi sambhavam", (க்ருதாதிஷு நரா ராஜந் கலௌ இச்சந்தி ஸம்பவம்). A foretelling the birth of Azhvars in Kali Yuga, on the banks of the sacred rivers, Thamraparni, Palar, Kaveri, Kritamala and Pratheechee. The great Narayana-bhaktas, who were born in Krita, Thretha and Dwapara Yugas, were very keen on being reborn in Kali Yuga, on the banks of these rivers and, therefore, they did not go to Heavens at the end of their respective spans of life. They went through birth after birth, only to achieve their cherished desire of being born in Kali Yuga and actually these were the Azhvars—the first three Azhvars and Thirumazhisaippiran appeared in the Palar region; Nammazhvar and Madhurakavi on the banks of Tamraparni, Periazhvar and Andal near Kritamala, Thiruppanan and Thirumangai Azhvars in the Kaveri region. This was high-lighted for the first time in 'Acharya-hridayam' by Sri Alagiya Manavala Perumal Nayanar as, தமிழ் மாமுனிக்கு சரண்யமென்றவர்களாலே க்வசித் க்வசித்தென்றிவராவிர்ப்பாவம் கலியுங் கெடும்போலே ஸூசிதம்" This has been adopted by Desika as "அகஸ்த்யஸேவிதமான தேசத்திலே அநேக தேசிகாபதேசத்தாலே அவதரித்தருளினான்""-" பராங்குச பரகாலாதி ரூபத்தாலே அபிநவமாக வொரு தசாவதாரம் பண்ணினான்" being based upon the text "அத்ரிஜமதக்நி பங்க்திரதவஸு நந்தஸூநுவானவனுடைய யுகவர்ணக்ரமாவதாரமோ!

Another relevant quotation from 'Acharya-hirdayam' would be "மேகம்பருகின ஸமுத்ராம்புபோலே நூற்கடற்சொல் இவர் வாயனவாய்த்திருந்தியவாறே ஸர்வதா ஸர்வோபஜீவ்யமாமே." In his esoteric work called 'Guru-paramparaa-Saaram,' Sri Desika has referred to the aforesaid Slokas of Sri Bhagavatam, foretelling the advent of the Azhvars in the South and also virtually reproduced the lines in 'Acharya-hridayam' as "மேகங்கள் ஸமுத்ரஜலத்தை வாங்கி ஸர்வோபஜீவ்யமான தண்ணீராக உமிழுமாபோலே". It is thus clear that Sri Desika has closely followed the texts of the other Acharyas. Apart from the Slokas of 'Sri Bhagavatam', Nammazhar has himself mentioned in the Thiruvoimozhi "மாறி மாறிப் பலபிறப்பும் பிறந்து" the cycle of births he had gone through. Thirukkuragai piran pillan has also taken it literally in his commentary on Thiruvoimozhi and not as a modest se" facing state-

ment of the Azhvar. Put in the mouth of the perplexed mother of Parankusa nayaki, the line in Thiruvoimozhi, மின்னைகொல், நிலமாமகள் கொல், திருமகள் கொல் however, expresses the doubt whether the love-lorn Azhvar was, as it were, an incarnation of Sri, Bhoomi or Neela Devi. This is just another angle from which their glory and prowess could be viewed. There is thus no question of Kali and (or) his agents, including Sri Desika, playing havoc with the Azhvars and pulling them down from their pedestal.

ON THE INSTITUTION CALLED 'ADRISHTARTHA'

Courting a Guru (Acharya), as an effective medium of attaining to the feet of the Lord, is an integral part of Vaishnavism. This is known as 'Samaasrayana' or 'Pancha samskara'. The pancha samskaras are set out as (1) " *Thapah*, (2) *pundras*, thathaa (3) *naama* (4) *mantro* (5) *yagascha* panchamah, amee paramasamskaaraah paaramaikantya-hethavah". (தாப: புண்ட்ர: ததா நாம மந்த்ரோ யாகச்ச பஞ்சம:, அமீ பரம ஸம்ஸ்காரா: பாரமைகாந்த்ய ஹேதவ:). The fourth-mentioned 'Mantra samskara'–the initiation of the disciple (Sishya) by the Acharya into 'Dvayam', the 'Mantra Ratna,' the gem of mantras–is by far the most vital part of it and it is that which delivers the goods. That nothing more than this is needed has been succinctly set forth by Sri Desika in the chapter entitled 'Kritakrityadhikara' of his 'Rahasyatraya-sara'—

"அநாதிகாலம் ஆஜ்ஞாதிலங்கனமடியாகவுண்டான பகவந்நிக்ரஹத்தாலே ஸம்ஸரித்துப் போந்த நமக்கு அவஸர ப்ரதீக்ஷையான பகவத்க்ருபையடியாகவுண்டான ஸதாசார்ய கடாக்ஷ விஷயீகாரத்தாலே வந்த த்வயோச்சாரணாநூச்சாரணத்தாலே ப்ரபத்த்யநுஷ்டாநம் பிறந்தபின்பு சரண்யப்ரஸாதநங்களில் இதுக்குமேல் ஒன்றில்லாமையாலே நிக்ரஹ ஹேதுக்களையெல்லாம் க்ஷமித்துத்தீர்ந்தவடியவர் தம்மைத் திருத்திப் பணிகொள்ளவல்ல ஸர்வசேஷியான ச்ரியப்பதி தன்பேறாகத்தம்மை ரக்ஷிக்குமென்று தேறி நிர்ப்பரனுமிருமென்கை. இது "மாசுச:" என்கிற சரண்ய வாக்கியத்திலும் தீர்த்த பொருள்".

The exact equivalent of this, in Sanskrit, is found in Sri Desika's commentary on Sri Ramanuja's "Saranagathi Gadyam"—"Ethena anaadi-kaalam aagnaathi-langhana-moola-Bhaghavad-aprasaadena samsaratho may Bhagavat-kripamoola-sadaacharyaangeekaarena dvayoccharana-anooccharana-poorvaka-swarakshaabharanyase siddhe prasaadanesha asmath-abhyadhikasya abhaavaath sweekrithabharah Sriyahpathir Narayanah............' ஏதேந அநாதி காலம் ஆஜ்ஞாதிலங்கநமூல-பகவத்-அப்ரஸாதேந ஸம்ஸரதோ மே, பகவத்-க்ருபா மூலஸதாசார்யாங்கீகாரேண த்வயோச்சாரணாநூச்சாரணபூர்வக-ஸ்வரக்ஷாபரந்யாஸே ஸித்தே ப்ரஸாதநேஷு அஸ்மாத் அப்யதிகஸ்ய அபாவாத் ஸ்வீக்ருதபர: ச்ரிய: பதி: நாராயண:-)

Such being the crystal-clear position in this regard, it is difficult to comprehend the why and wherefore of the observance, known as 'Adrishatartha' resorted to by those in the other Camp, supplementing the 'Acharya-samaasrayanam', referred to above. 'Adrishtartha' would literally mean

'unseen meaning' and it is indeed so, such a practice not being enjoined by the Sastras or in conformity with the traditional observances of the Acharyas of yore. There is, however, nothing exceptionable in the conduct of this 'Adrishtartha, or 'Bharanyasa', as it is called, as many times as these people think it necessary and it does not call for any serious notice and much less criticism, although its superfluity has already been brought out. But then, they would do well to leave others in peace and desist from calling them names. They would also do well to note that even the 'Acharya-samasrayana', referred to earlier, is, strictly speaking, only a 'Vaishnava Deeksha' and not a '*sine qua non*' for securing 'Moksha', which has been duly vouchsafed by Lord Ranganatha to Sri Ramanuja and all his disciples, as well as their descendants. This has already been dealt with, *in extenso*, in this treatise and only the catch-words "Surthvaa varam thadanubandha-madaavalipthe' சுருத்வா வரம் ததநுபந்த மதாவலிப்தே need be reproduced here, by way of furbishing the reader's memory. Do the innovators think and feel that this sure and certain link with Sri Ramanuja does not extend up to them? Otherwise, they can hardly justify the novelty of an undue multiplicity of the 'Bharanyaasa'.

V. ATTITUDE TOWARDS RITES AND RITUALS

" Kriyamaanam na kasmaichith yadarthaaya prakalpathe, akriyaavada-narthaaya thath thu karma samaachareth" (க்ரியமாணம் ந கஸ்மைசித் யதர்த்தாய ப்ரகல்பதே. அக்ரியாவதநர்த்தாய தத்து கர்ம ஸமாசரேத்.) is an authoritative text, invoked by Sri Desika also. The attitude of the Poorvacharyas towards the performance of rites and rituals has also followed this text only, which ordains that only such of those rites and rituals need be put through, that will not make one bound down by their fruits (results) or the non-performance of which will have deleterious effects. Their observances in this regard have, therefore, closely followed this basic principle and it can be inferred that whatever was not observed by them, such as dropping the oblations (tharpanas) on all but four 'Sankramanas', (the days on which the sun transits from one house in the zodiac to the next) etc., conformed to this guiding factor. Of the fivefold form or manifestation of God (viz) *Para*, *Vyuha*, *Vibhava*, *Antharyami* and *Arcchavatara*, *Para* is the transcendental form of God; *Vyuha*, His operative form—the galaxy of Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, the seat of activity shifting from the High Heavens (Sri Vaikuntha) to the milky ocean; *Vibhava* is the incarnate form such as Sri Rama and Sri Krishna; *Antaryami* is the pervasive form of the Deity dwelling in the heart of every living being and realised by the Yogins through meditation; *Arcchavatara* is the image form in the temples and houses of worshippers,

which God assumes in accordance with the wishes of His devotees, the very cream of theistic philosophy. Situated as we are, our worshipping the Lord in His *Para*, *Vyuha*, and *Vibhava* forms is not practicable. The only two other worshippable forms are, therefore, *Antaryami* and *Arcchavatara*. Here again, the former is worshipped through rites and rituals (Karmanushthanam) as distinguished from the 'Kainkaryanushthanam' such as garlanding, burning incense, sacramental bathing of the Deity, chanting the hymns of the Azhvars, Upanishads etc., in the Divine Presence, etc., which are the media of worshipping the Lord in His Archa form. In the 'Karmanushthana', the relative mantras are replete with the names of the minor deities, in the pantheon—Agni, Indra, Soma (Moon), Varuna, Prajapathi, Pasupathi Brihaspathi, Vayu, Surya (Sun) etc. The rituals primarily dedicated to these lesser gods, propitiate, in fact, the Supreme Lord, enshrined in them all, as 'Antaryami'— "இருக்குமிறையிறுத்துண்ண எவ்வுலகுக்கும் தன் மூர்த்தி நிறுத்தினன் தெய்வங்களாக அத்தெய்வநாயகன் தானே" — Thiruvoimozhi. The unremitting and blemishless service of the Lord, spoken of by Saint Nammazhvar in "ஒழிவில் காலமெல்லாம் உடனாய்மன்னி வழுவிலா வடிமை செய்யவேண்டும் நாம்" is possible only in Archavatara. Nammazhvar did not stand alone in his commendation of service of the Lord in the Arccha and glorifying those blessed souls participating in such service. Thondaradippodigal, Thirumangai Azhvar and others have also stressed the importance and glory of the 'Kainkaryanushthana'. It is, therefore, but natural and proper that those descending from the illustrious lineage of the stalwarts, who were soaked in God-love, saturated, as it were, in the blissful enjoyment of the beatific hymns of the Azhvars, followed in the foot-steps of their forbears and have their roots in 'Kainkarya', sticking to the 'Karma' part of their obligations to the irreducible minimum requirement only. This is in dire contrast to those who were and are still reciting exclusively the Vedas, dealing with rites and rituals (Karma-kalapas) and their followers, who naturally lay special stress on the ritualistic proceedings. These two categories are referred to as 'Dasa-vrithi' and Varna-dharmi' in 'Acharya-Hridayam'. The illustrious Parasara Bhattar has hit at a wonderful fusion or blending of the two in his 'Sri Rangaraja Stava' where he refers to the "Srirangapalana-Karmathaan"—(ஸ்ரீரங்க பாலந கர்மடா:) —the Nitya-karmanushthana or service in the temple. Even so, the Lord's own statement—"Srutis Smrithir mamaivagnaa" (ச்ருதி: ஸ்ம்ருதி: மமைவாஜ்ஞா) is not lost sight of and Nitya, Naimitthika karmas are also put through to the extent they are necessary or inescapable. For a better, rather fuller appreciation of the exact position in this regard, a study of the 'Purusharthadhikarana Sri Bhashya', at the feet of the great masters, is imperative.

It should now be abundantly clear that E. T. S. and others of his mental persuasion are indulging in wanton mischief and Kali has only to blush with shame and meekly acknowledge that he is nowhere before these men and perhaps he might even begin to feel that he can secure the effective fulfilment of his mission through them. Before concluding this section and taking up a few more topics in the next, it seems pertinent to refer to the 65th argument in the disputation called, 'Sathadooshani' of Sri Vedanta Desika, where-in the example "Sthreedharminyaam aatmajananyaamiva,' (ஸ்த்ரீதர்மிண்யாம் ஆத்மஜநந்யாமிவ) has been cited by him to illustrate the position of the Azhvars during their life time. It says that even as the mother, though entitled to reverence, is kept aloof during her menstrual courses, the Azhvars who were born in low castes were kept aloof. But then, a Brahmin of the eminence of Madhura Kavi took refuge at the feet of Nammazhvar, who made his appearance in Sudra community—"[illegible]". The high priest of the temple, Loka Saranga Mahamuni carried over his shoulders, Thiruppanazhvar, brought up by untouchables, all the way to the temple of Ranganatha, under divine command, and it was for the hymns of this Azhvar that Sri Desika wrote out a commentary, known as 'Munivahana bhogam'. What else is it but mere idle talk, totally unrelated to facts, referring to Sri Desika as the conqueror of Kali and things of that sort?

(Section IV)

(TRUTH SHALL ENDURE)

The solid truth:– The Lord, in His unbounded mercy, revealed Himself fully to Saint Nammazhvar. Saturated with the Lord's grace, Nammazhvar showered all that grace on Sriman Nathamuni, who, in turn, passed it on to his grandson Yamunacharya (Alavandar) through Manakkal Nambi and thence it flowed into the expansive lake of knowledge of Sri Ramanuja through such mighty feeder channels as Sri Periya Nambi, Thirumalai Nambi, Thirukkottiyur Nambi and Thirumaalai Andan. "Nathopagnam pravrittham bahubhirupachitham Yamuneya-prabandhais thraatham samyag Yatheendrairidamakhilathamah-karsanam darsanam nah". (நாதோபஜ்ஞம் ப்ரவ்ருத்தம் பஹுபிருபசிதம் யாமுநேயப்ரபந்தை: த்ராதம் ஸம்யக் யதீந்த்ரை: இதமகிலதம:கர்சனம் தர்சனம் ந:) From that huge lake, the water passed through two streams, namely (1) Embar, Azhvan, Bhattar, Nanjeeyar, Nambillai etc. and (2) Thirukkurugaippiran Pillan, Kidambi Aacchan, Yengalazhvan, Nadathoor Ammal etc., to irrigate this good Earth for the uplift of the surging humanity. These Acharyas spoke the same language and it would be futile to look for any difference of views among them. The only variation, if at all, could be in the

method of presentation, but basically their teachings are indivisible. Sri Vedanta Desika looked upon Sri Parasara Bhattar as a reincarnation of Sri Ramanuja and imbibed a good deal of Nambillai's teachings through the works of his disciple, Sri Periavachan Pillai. The reader can derive full and complete satisfaction in this topic by going through Sri P. B. A. Swami's 'Desika hridayam' and allied works. It is only to be hoped that people, who are truly dispassionate and keen on getting at the correct picture, will shake off their parochial outlook, come out of their shell and enjoy the mighty grandeur of Sri Desika's works, as revealed by this mighty savant, admitted on all hands as a great marvel of learning in modern times.

As the proud inheritors of a priceless Treasure, vast and beautiful, we have before us the whole galaxy of the mighty builders of this Treasure beginning from Sriman Nathamuni and ending with Manavala Mahamunigal. We have thus a clear picture of "Who is Who?" and are rightly conscious of the great debt we owe them, singly and collectively. No Vaishnavite worth the name can be disrespectful to any of them and much less indulge in rilery and abuse, trying to tarnish the good name and reputation of one or the other. It would also be presumptuous on the part of even the most learned among us to attempt a process of vivisection and apportion the credit and glory among these Acharyas, by indulging in loose and irreverential talk such as: So and so dug the foundation, so and so filled it up; so and so raised it to plinth level, so and so put up the structure, so and so raised additional storeys, so and so conducted marriages there and so on and so forth. Although this sort of study might tickle the intellectual vanity of individuals and afford them immense personal satisfaction, they shall be doing great disservice to the hallowed Bhagavad-Ramanuja Darsana as such, by publicising it. To hold that generations of Sri Vaishnavites are indebted only to Sri Desika, but for whose services the great rivers of Sanskrit and Tamil cultures would be flowing separately, is all of the same piece. The dispassionate reader should note that a clear grasp of the Tamil Vedas (Divya prabandham) by Sri Desika was made possible only by his study of the literature already bequeathed to him and this has been acknowledged by him: "செய்ய தமிழ்மாலைகள் நாம் தெளிய ஓதித் தெளியாத மறை நிலங்கள் தெளிகின்றோமே." See also Sri Ramanujam 217. The real homage, we can and should pay to Sri Desika, shall be by way of delving deep into his numerous works, revelling in the 'full many a gem of the purest ray serene', lying embedded in them and presenting them to the world at large, for appreciating his literary genius and his enormous learning. In fact, this is how the contemporary Acharyas as well as those belonging to the later periods partook of the rich repast provided by Swami Desika and deified him, as already brought out in the earlier sections. It is not as if Sri Desika has been

discovered anew by the founders of the 'Munithraya Sampradayam'—the three Sanyasins, who were the disciples of Sri Gopala Desikan of Kumbakonam, already referred to, in passing. That, however, marks for them the beginning of a new éra of disruption and dissociation from the Thennacharyas, claiming Sri Vedanta Desika as an exclusively Vadakalai Acharya and despising Manavala Mahamunigal as a Thenkalai Acharya, not to be venerated by them. Fabrication of anecdotes intended to boost Sri Desika as the performer of miracles, displaying superhuman powers, suffers from sheer banality, as such miracles are not the exclusive monopoly of a Vaishnava Acharya and do not enhance his stature in the hierarchy. It has gone on record that, in the year 1937, Sri P. B. A. Swami came face to face with a Muslim gentleman, who offered to reproduce any script kept hidden on the former's person and actually produced a written sheet of paper from the adjoining room, an exact replica of what the Swami had kept tucked up inside his clothes, after writing therein a few tough verses in a number of scripts, and that too, no sooner than he had finished writing them. Another memorable performance was that of a magician who, in the year 1930, kept his Madras audience, nay, the whole of Madras spell-bound, by advancing the clock all over the place by four hours. The show had been publicised as of four hours' duration, commencing from 4 P.M., but the magician took the stage at 4 P.M., sharp, only to bid goodbye to a loudly protesting audience, who demanded the full fare of entertainment for the couple of rupees each of them had paid. Lo! the magician pulled out his watch showing 8 O'clock and, for once in our memory, it was 8 O'clock, in all watches, and it transpired that even the tower clock at the Madras Central Station registered the same time. Is not making time stand still or run faster throughout the city, by as many as four hours, a remarkable feat? Miracles are, therefore, not to be gloated upon, in the particular context of our discussions.

Sri Vedanta Desika was literally the 'Poet's poet' and he excelled in all the four divisions or styles of poetry, viz, the extempore, melodic, ornate and elaborate. By his exemplary life and conduct and through his numerous works, he has enriched Vaishnavism enormously and every one of us is under a deep debt of gratitude to him. His poem, entitled 'Paduka-sahasram' comprising a thousand verses of rare excellence, is indeed his 'Magnum Opus'. There is hardly any need to import and invent a number of widely differing stories regarding the manner of its birth and bring the celebrated Thennacharyas into disrepute. Actually, there was nothing like a challenge or competition and, as Sri Desika himself has put it in the 41st verse, he just fulfilled an inner urge to compose these thousand verses in the presence of prominent

scholars. It is neither necessary nor worthwhile to dilate on the genesis of the poem when there is so much to enjoy in the poem itself and no time to lose on extraneous issues, the more so, when they are of doubtful authenticity. It is indeed gratifying to note that in his edition of Sri Desika's Srimad Rahasyathraya Sara, Navaneetham Srirama Desikachariar of Oppiliappan Sannidhi has candidly acknowledged that "It is true that the biography of Sri Desika has been told differently by different writers, in regard to the time, place, sequence and manner of occurence of the events". Such discrepancies are bound to creep in, when extraneous motives are called into play and the writers feel inclined to give free vent to their own whims and fancies, personal predilections and prejudices. Some years ago, a doubt was raised whether Sri Desika was born in the year Vibhava or Sukla and perhaps it could not be resolved satisfactorily.

Before concluding this treatise, it seems necessary to focus the attention of the reader on a few more topics, which, apart from the basic underlying truths, as revealed by Sri Desika himself, have assumed special importance in the light of the controversy raging round them, particularly during the last 150 to 200 years.

I. IS GOD'S GRACE FREE (NIRHETHUKA), OR CONDITIONAL (SAHETHUKA)?

While it is admitted on all hands that God's Grace is our sole means of salvation, the point for enquiry is whether it operates, unasked and unaided, or any endeavour is needed on our part to invoke and secure it. That no special conditions support God's Grace and all that is required is non-resistance or non-rejection, when Grace is forthcoming, have been lucidly established by all the Acharyas including Sri Desika, who, as a matter of fact, is right in the vanguard in this respect. In his 'Paramapada-sopanam' Sri Desika stated "அஜ்ஞாதயாத்ருச்சிக ஆநுஷங்கிக ப்ராஸங்கிக ஸாமாந்யபுத்திமூலஸாக்ருத விசேஷங்களை வியாஜமாகக்கொண்டு விசேஷகடாக்ஷம் பண்ணி" and later on, he categorically emphasised the 'avyaaja-kripa' (அவ்யாஜக்ருபா) unconditional Grace of the Lord in 'Dramidopanishad-Tatparya-Ratnavali'. The sloka in question beginning with 'Aadaavittham parathwa' (ஆதாவித்தம் பரத்வ) refers to 'avyaajodaara bhaavaath' (அவ்யாஜோதாரபாவாத்) and is based upon the commentaries on the first centum of 'Thiruvoimozhi', other than the 6000 granthas (ஆறாயிரப்படி) of Pillan. Sri Parasara Bhattar's observation that this particular Thiruvoimozhi spotlights the Lord's nirhethuka kripa (free or unconditional Grace) has been incorporated in these commentaries and Sri Desika's reference to 'avyajodara-bhaavaath' is but the outcome of his study of the said commentaries of Thiruvoimozhi. This incidentally gives the lie direct to the allegation that

Sri Desika wrote out his own commentary known as 'Nigama Parimalam' out of his distaste for the meanings contained in the commentaries that came up after the 6000 granthas. Of course, there are many more instances of this kind. It may also be noted that the text in Sri Desika's 'Paramapada-Sopanam,' quoted earlier, closely follows the text in Pillailokachariar's 'Srivachana-bhushanam' which reads: "...ஜன்ம பரம்பரைகள் தோறும் யாத்ருச்சிகம் ப்ராஸங்கிகம் ஆநுஷங்கிக மென்கிற ஸுக்ருத விசேஷங்களைக் கற்பித்துக்கொண்டு தானே அவற்றை ஒன்று பத்தாக்கி நடத்திக்கொண்டு போரும்". Again, the sloka in Desika's 'Dayaasathakam', 'Nishaadaanaam netha kapi-kulapathih kaapi Sabaree' (நிஷாதாநாம் நேதா கபிகுலபதி: காபி சபரீ) refers only to the free Grace, which Sri Rama and Krishna bestowed upon Guha, Sugreeva, Sabari, Kuchela, Kubja, Gopis and Malakara. Above all, Desika's 'Munivahana-bhogam' contains the following gloss towards the end: "காரண விசேஷம் இன்னதென்று அறுதியிட அரிதாயிருப்பதொரு பகவத்கடாக்ஷத்தாலே அயத்நஸித்தமான... ..". In the face of all these, the argument, that the Lord's Grace will not be forth-coming without sufficient grounds or motivation, just skittles down.

WITH WHOM DOES THE INITIATIVE REST FOR THE SALVATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL (JEEVA)-GOD OR MAN?

(Paragatha-sweekara versus Swagatha-sweekara and allied themes)

God's Grace is no doubt free and unconditional, and yet it alights on man, only when he exhibits a distinct predilection for God. That is because man has free-will, whose perversity resists the free operation of God's Grace. By merely courting God, one does not secure His Grace. It is His will that prevails. Self-surrender or submission to His protection does not, therefore, constitute by itself the means to secure Him. The Sruthi in Kathopanishad "Naayamaatmaa pravachanena labhyo na medhayaa na bahunaa sruthena, yamevaisha vrunuthe thena labhyas thasyaisha aatmaa vivrunuthe thanoom swaam" (நாயமாத்மா ப்ரவசநேந லப்யோ ந மேதயா ந பஹுநா ச்ருதேந: யமேவைஷ வ்ருணுதே தேந லப்யஸ் தஸ்யைஷ ஆத்மா விவ்ருணுதே தநூம் ஸ்வாம்) establishes, in no unmistaken terms, the case for 'Paragatha-sweekara' (i.e.) God wooing His devotee and taking him within His grip, like unto the familiar illustration of the cat gripping its kitten by the teeth-marjara-kisora nyaya. The meaning of this upanishadic text is: The Paramatma is not attainable by the Aatma (individual soul) through mere meditation, recitation and deep learning; on the other hand, He reveals Him-self, in all His splendour, to the subject of His choice. How He excercises the choice in question is, however, not a matter for conjecture, as there is His own pronouncement: 'Gnanee thu aatmaiva may matham',

(ஜ்ஞாநீ து ஆத்மைவ மே மதம்). 'Ananyachethaas sathatham yo maam Smarathi nithyasah, thasyaaham sulabhah Partha! nithya-yukthasya yoginah". (அநந்ய சேதாஸ்ஸததம் யோ மாம் ஸ்மரதி நித்யச:, தஸ்யாஹம் ஸுலப: பார்த்த நித்யயுக்தஸ்ய யோகிந:) in chapters VII and VIII respectively of Bhagavad Gita. In his interpretation of the latter Sloka in the Gita Bhashya, Sri Ramanuja has taken his stand on the upanishadic text (Sruti) quoted above, which is the cardinal plank for the establishment of the truth about Paragatha swockara and setting at naught the diametrically opposite view of the individual getting hold of the Supreme Master (Swagatha sweekara). Sri Desika has followed in the footsteps of Sri Ramanuja and said in the gloss known as "Thaathparya Chandrika', in this very context "Ahamova tham vrune...... Abameva dadaami ithyarthah" (அஹமேவ தம் வ்ருணே.....அஹமேவ ததாமீத்யர்த்த:). When he found that there was lurking uneasiness in some quarters that Sri Ramanuja had overshot the mark (athivaada) by putting every thing on the Lord and making it all one-way traffic, Sri Desika silenced these critics, the doubting Thomases, by his prefatory remarks, 'Ukthasya athivaadamathrathva-sankaavyudaasaaya sruti-moolathaamaaha—yame ethi (உக்தஸ்ய அதிவாதமாத்ர த்வசங்காவ்யுதாஸாய ச்ருதி மூலதாமாஹ-யமேவேதி). The crucial vedic text has been clarified further ay the Lord, that He makes Himself the object of easy attainment by the Gnani, who pines for Him, by fostering that love, more and more, and removing all the obstacles and impediments in his path. He assiduously prepares the ground for the final union or consummation, being Himself unable to bear separation from his most beloved devotees. This is also inherent in the fundamental relationship between God (Swaami-Master) and Man (Swam-property) and His inescapable obligations, in regard to His fold of His property, a matter of *personal gain for Him indeed.* To hold that attainment of God is a gain for the individual soul would mean putting things in the reverse gear, thereby losing the correct perspective. Crying one's heart out and weeping for God all the time cannot be construed as the means for attaining Him. Those are but the traits of those, soaked in God-love through His Grace, and can at best, be passive quiescence, the Lord alone being the active principle, the materialising Agent. This has been pin-pointed by Sri Desika, when he says in 'Gita Bhashya Thaathparya Chandrika', glossing on the sloka "Munmanaa bhava........." (மந்மநா பவ) towards the end of chapter IX—'Aasritha-samrakshanam *swalaabham mathvaa pravarthathe*' (ஆச்ரிதஸம் ரக்ஷணம் ஸ்வலாபம் மத்வா ப்ரவர்த்ததே). Multiplicity of genuflections and addresses to the Lord such as 'Tvatpaada-moolam saranam prapadye', (த்வத்பாதமூலம் சரணம் ப்ரபத்யே), 'புகலொன்றில்லா அடியேன் உன்னடிக்கீழ் அமர்ந்து புகுந்தேனே' etc., do not, *per se*, mean that we have actually got hold of Him, but only indicate the favourable trends that have been cultivated in us by an ever-alert and

watchful Master, bent upon retrieving and reclaiming us, all the time, like unto the good shephered going after the lost lamb, the one, which had strayed away from his flock. To arrogate to ourselves the initiative of the so-called constructive approach to the Lord with a sense of personal importance and involvement, will certainly militate against the principle of self-abnegation, which alone makes the individual jiva adequately receptive, and responsive to the favours extended by the Lord. In one of his Rahasya texts Sri Desika has referred to '*ghunakshatha-lipikramaath* upanipaathinah paathinah' (குணக்ஷத லிபிக்ரமாத் உபநிபாதிந: பாதிந:) 'This enunciates the principle of what is known as 'Ghunakshara-nyaya' (i.e.) the scripts, which could be made out from the zig-zag trail of a worm, are just accidental and so are our mumblings. The words in italics are based on the observation, already made by Nambillai and Periavacchan pillai 'புழுகுறித்தது எழுத்தாமாப்போலே'. In this short treatise, it was deemed expedient to combine all the three components of this topic, namely,

(1) Paragatha sweekara vs swagatha sweekara;
(2) Reclamation of the Jeeva is the Lord's personal gain;
and (3) Prapatthi or surrendering to His Grace and protection is not by itself the means to the End.

The texts of Sri Vedanta Desika, supporting these, are presented below, in a concise view.

(1) Gita Bhashya Thaathparya Chandrika, "Ahameva thaan vrune...........Ahameva dadaami ithyarthah."

(2) Gita Bhashya Thaathparya Chandrika, 'Aasritha-samrakshanam swalaabham mathva pravarthathe'.
The vedic text 'Ahamannam ahamannam, ahamannam'. [The word underlined in "*praharshayishyaami* sanaathajeevithah" of sloka 46 of Sri Alavandar's 'Sthothra Ratnam' is also the pointer, in this regard.]

(3) Gitartha-sangraha-raksha—"Swayam swaaduthvath kshanikasya kaalaanthara-bhaavi phalasaadhanatwa-anupapatthidarsanaaccha naasya swavyaapare mokshopayathva-buddhirapi syaath ithi bhaavah. Anthathas thaisthairaaraadhitho Bhagavaneva hi sarvathra upayah" (ஸ்வயம் ஸ்வாதுத்வாத், க்ஷணிகஸ்ய காலாந்தரபாவி-பலஸாதநத்வ-அநுபபத்திதர்சநாச்ச, நாஸ்ய ஸ்வவ்யாபாரே மோக்ஷோபாயதாபுத்திரபி ஸ்யாதிதி பாவ:)
in elucidation of Sri Alavandar's "Nijakarmaadi-bhakthyantham kuryath preethyaiva kaarithah........" (நிஜகர்மாதி பக்த்யந்தம் குர்யாத் ப்ரீத்யைவ காரித:)
Rahasya thraya Sara—"Nidaanam bhathraapi swayamakhilanirmaana nipunah". (நிதாநம் தத்ராபி ஸ்வயமகிலநிர்மாணநிபுண:) etc , etc.

APPENDIX-A.

CALENDAR OF PERSONS TRIED BEFORE C. S. CROLE ESQUIRE AG. JOINT MAGISTRATE OF CHINGLEPUT DISTRICT.

No. of the Case 72 of 1874.

Name and description of the accused :—

I. T. Srinivasavaradachari 1, R. Varadachari 2, Aiya Tirumalaitatachari 3, Sri Krishnatatachari 4 (and 10 others).

IV. Name of Complainant :— Ramanujachari.

[True copy of last portion of judgment, (matter in brackets inserted for clarification.)]

"I have no hesitation in deciding that the account of the affair given by 4th defendant (Sri Krishnatatachari) is a true one. He says that soon after the temple was made over in December last (1873), some Vadagalai, to him unknown, converted the Tengalai Namam in question (large Tengalai Namam in brick and chunam above the main entrance of the Vedanta Desikar shrine of Vilakkadi Koil) into a Vadagalai one by removing the base. It is in evidence that there was no guard placed there at nights, that doors were not even locked and that one man unassisted could easily have climbed up and committed the act during the night without being discovered.

While acquitting the defendants on this charge also I consider that in the interests of peace and order the 4th defendant, as custodian of the fabric of the temple, should lose no time in showing the bonafide of his defence by restoring the mark to its former condition.

The Court further remarks with extreme reprehension that the defendants or their friends in Madras have sought to bring private influence to bear over the decision of these matters by causing Dr. Stambrough, Health officer of Madras to address to me a letter recommending the defendants to favourable consideration. I can only characterise this as a grievous indiscretion and Dr. Stambrough's conduct as a most grave contempt, the slightest repetition of which will subject the perpetrator to the penalties provided for the offence.

(Sd.) C. S. CROLE,
Ag. Joint Magistrate,
23—10—1874.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS.

Thursday, the 19th day of April 1883.

PRESENT:

THE HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE INNES,
THE HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE MUTHUSAMI IYER, C. I. E.

SECOND APPEAL No. 411 OF 1881.

(*Civil Miscellaneous Petition No. 23 of 1882.*)

1. Ellappa Mudali 2. Arumuga Mudali 3. Peruma Mudali .... 10. Chappani Mudali	*Appellants (1st to 4th and 6th to 11th Plaintiffs).*
1. Sri Kristna Totachariar 2. Srinivasavarada Tatachariar .... 7. P. Tata Desika Tatachariar	*Respondents (6th, 10th, 12th, 17th, 19th and 30th Defendants.)*

Second appeal against the Decrees of the District Court of Chingleput in Appeal Suits Nos. 182 and 97 of 1879, reversing the decree of the Court of the District Munsif of Trivallur in Original Suit No. 297 of 1878.

The Second Appeal came for hearing on Wednesday the 1st day of March 1882, and stood over for consideration till Tuesday, the 11th July 1882, when the Court delivered the following Judgment.

"The Plaintiffs of the weaver caste sued to establish their exclusive right to the Trusteeship of the temple of Vedanta Desikar in Conjeevaram.

....The District Munsif, V. Sundara Ramaiya who disposed of the case now before us, in a careful, elaborate and very able judgment came to the conclusion that the Plaintiffs were hereditary Trustees and gave them the decree asked for."

"The District Judge has reversed the decree of the District Munsiff, and the case comes now in Second Appeal before the High Court."

"Assuming the hereditary right of the Tatacharis, they must have had it in 1811, but in the suit of that year (Exhibit 32), it was decided that the service was to commence with the Thengalai Mantram. It is in the highest degree improbable that the Tatacharis, if they had the hereditary right of Trusteeship, would have allowed the Thengalais to introduce their ritual. On the other hand, assuming the dependence of the smaller temple on the larger,

and its subordination consequently to the Kakkalaya trustees of the larger temple, the introduction of a Thengalai ritual is not unintelligible."

We think the following issues should be sent for determination on the evidence already given–

'Whether the temple of Vedanta Desikar is subordinate to the temple of Dipaprakasaswami?'

'Whether, at the date of the agreement Q and its counterpart Aw, the plaintiffs were the trustees of the temple of Vedanta Desikar?'.......

We remit the case tor the trial of these issues directing a return to be made in two months from the date of the receipt of this order when 14 days will be allowed for filing objections."

In compliance with the above order the District Judge submitted the following FINDING

1ST ISSUE

6. "3rd—The Patram is the same in both. This obviously proves nothing. The same Patram is recited in all the 18 temples of Vishnu in Conjeevaram. The Patram question was decided on the suit of 1811 in favour of the Thengalais not because theirs was the Patram of the adjacent Dipaprakasaswami; but because theirs was the Patram prevailing in all the other Vishnu Pagodas in Conjeevaram.".......

8. "5th—It is reputed to be the Vahanamantapam of Dipaprakasaswami turned into a temple. One witness (Plaintiff's 7th) deposed that it had the appearance of a Vahana Mantapam and another (the 13th) that he had seen in some circar account that it was a Vahana Mantapam. The account in question, giving full weight to it, can be nothing nore than a more record of the fact that such a tradition exists. It refers to a time separated from the present by an interval, of probably several centuries. There is, curiously enough, another tradition inconsistant with this one to the effect that the Desikar's temple was built on the spot where he was born, or that the house where he lived (six centuries ago) was converted into a temple where his idol was set up to be worshipped. The judgments of our Courts regarding this temple usually start with this tradition as if it were an unquestioned fact—vide the judgment in the great Patram suit of 1811, and that of the District Munsiff, Virasami Iyer, in Original Suit 637 of 1876, and this judgment under appeal paragraph 18. If this tradition is accepted, it would go far towards establishing the

independence of Desikar's temple. But I do not believe there is any foundation for either the one tradition or the other. I will revert hereafter to the hearing of the Tarapadi account and the Pymash on the question at issue."

14. "On the strength of the admission of the Tatacharis in 1861 and 1865 and of the evidence afforded by the Tarapadi and Pymash accounts, my finding on the 1st issue is that the temple of Vedanta Desikar is subordinate to the temple of Dipaprakasaswami."

2ND ISSUE

15. "The subordination of Dsikar's temple to Dipaprakasaswami's being established there is no great difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that the trustees of the latter must also be the trustees of the former............ It is probable enough that the reason why no evidence is forthcoming as to the trusteeship prior to 1861 is that it was never a question of any practical importance in the days when the Government took upon themselves a general control over the religious institutions of the country."

16. My finding on the 2nd issue is that at the date of Q and its counterpart Aw: the plaintiffs were the trustees of the temple of Vedantha Desikar."

This second appeal came again for hearing on Thursday the 14th December 1882, on return to the order of the 11th July 1882, and stood over for consideration till this day, when the Court delivered the following final

JUDGMENT

The matter in contest in this second appeal is the trusteeship of Vedantha Desikar's temple at Vilakudi a suburb of Conjeevaram. Vilakudi is reputed to have been the birth place of Vedantha Desikar, and the temple which is dedicated to him adjoins and touches that of Dipaprakasaswami, which is one of the names under which the image of Vishnu is worshipped by all classes of Vaishnavas as that of the supreme Being. The Kakkalars or weavers residing in Vilakudi are sivhites by religion, but they do not appear to have any sectarian prejudice against the worship of Vishnu.

The history of litigation regarding this temple, which commenced in 1811, discloses four rival claimants as regards its trusteeship..... ...Among the Vadagalais, the Tatacharis represent the descendants of one Tata Desikar who was the founder of a very learned and influential family at Conjeevaram. The Suit from which this Second Appeal arises was originally instituted by eleven defendants, of whom the first five were weavers and the other six were Tatacharis; and the plaintiffs prayed that their right of trusteeship be declared

and that an injunction be issued restraining all the Tatacharis from interfering with the exercise of such right.........

As to the first of the two issues, we sent for determination, the District Judge found on the strength of the Tarapadi and Pymash accounts and of the admission of Tatacharis in 1861 and 1865 that the temple of Vedanta Desikar was subordinate to that of Dipaprakasaswami. He found also the 2nd issue in plaintiff's favour. Against this finding, the Respondents have filed a memorandum of objections. We do not think that the objections taken to the findings returned by the District Court are well founded. The first five objections have reference to the weight to be attached to the Tarapadi and Pymash accounts.........Having regard to the nature of the Tarapadi account as a general survey, we think that the inference drawn by the Judge is fair and reasonable, and concur in his opinion that the difference in extent is not of importance.

As to the objections 6 and 7......in 1861, it was the present 8th defendant and the 15th defendant's father who acknowledged that Desikar's temple was attached to Dipaprakasaswami's temple (Ex. Ac.), but they then only sued* to compel the Archakar to put on the idol the Vadagalai mark or namam in their right (which is common to them and other Tatacharis) as owners of the first Tirtam; and there was no motive for referring to the dependence of Desikar's temple if it were not true. There is no reliable evidence in their favour prior to 1861 except what is alleged to have taken place in the suit of 1811 and in 1828. The suit of 1811 related to the "Patram" or hymn with which prayers were to be commenced in the temple and it was eventually decided that the hymn that ought to be sung was, according to THE USAGE of the institution, "Sri Silesa Dayapatram" which is a verse composed in honour of Manavala Mahamuni. Is it likely that, if it were not true as alleged in that suit by the Thengalais that the Kakkalayars had been heriditary Dharmakarthas the Thengalai "Patram" would have been in use?.........

The erection of a new temple in 1828 does not show anything beyond this, that Thirumalai Aiyangar, who incurred the expense desired to build a good temple in honour of Vedanta Desikar. The history of litigation subsequent to 1864 discloses a series of manoeuvres on the part of Tatacharis first to curtail and eventually to destory the right of the Kakkalars, and it does not appear that Tatacharis bethought themselves of their hereditary right until 1876. Upon these grounds and for the reasons mentioned in our former judgement, we have no hesitation in accepting the finding of the District Judge.

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*This suit was dismissed.